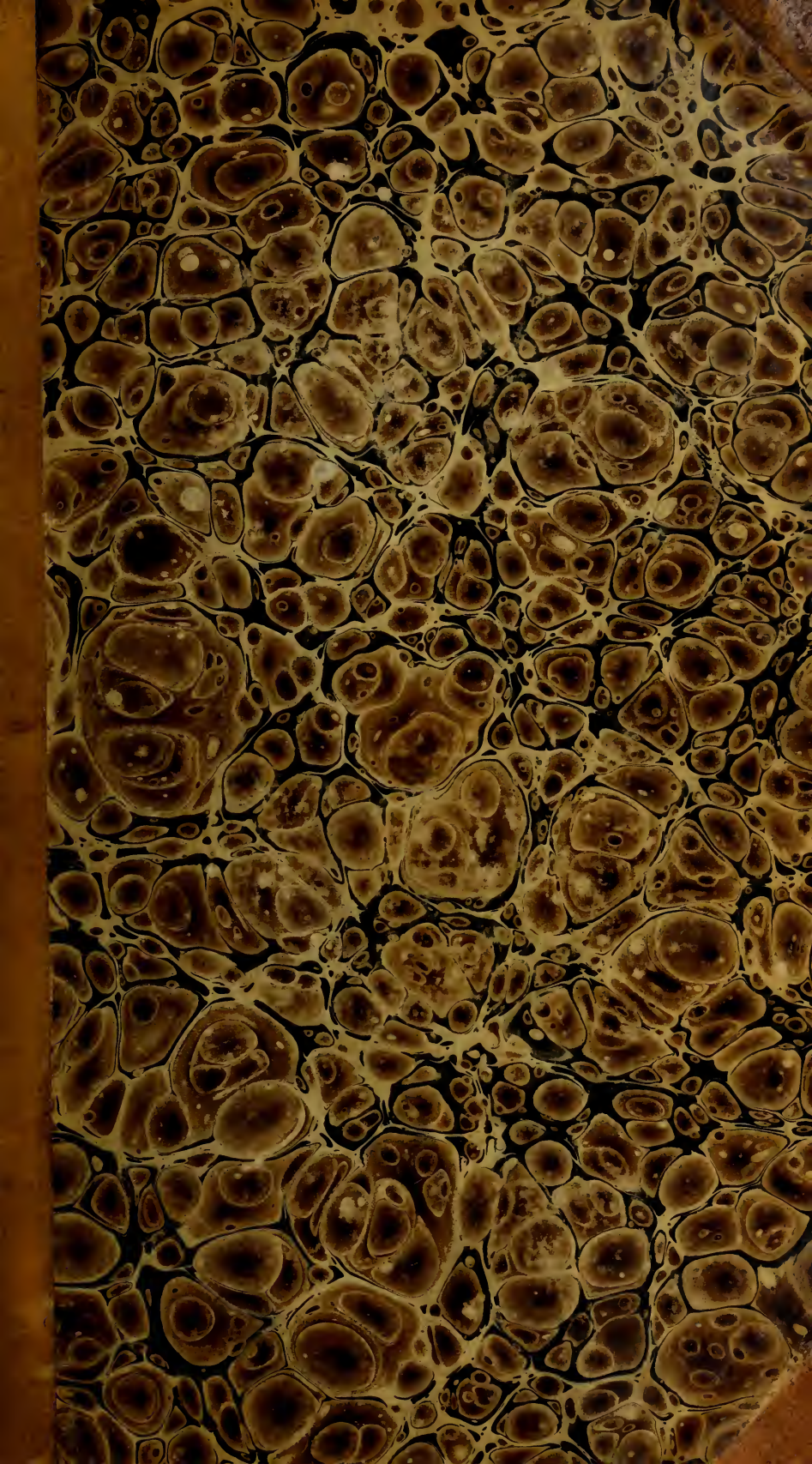






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PAUL ARDENHEIM



THE  
MONK  
OF  
WISSAHIKON.





# PAUL ARDENHEIM,

## THE MONK OF WISSAHIKON.

BY GEORGE LIPPARD,

AUTHOR OF "THE QUAKER CITY," "ROSE OF EPHRATA," "WASHINGTON  
AND HIS GENERALS, OR LEGENDS OF THE REVOLUTION," "LEGENDS  
OF MEXICO," "BLANCHE OF BRANDYWINE," "LADYE ANNABEL,"  
"ROSE OF WISSAHIKON," "THE NAZARENE, OR LAST OF  
THE WASHINGTONS," "HERBERT TRACY," &c., &c.

"These Legends of the olden time, have for the heart, a voice as stern and beautiful, as the sad tones from the lips of the dying. It is true, they were very superstitious, these early settlers of Pennsylvania—believed somewhat fervently in astrology, magic, witchcraft,—were imbued with all the mysticism of their Fatherland—and yet with it all, they had an unyielding hope in Man, a child-like faith in God."

MISS. MEMOIRS OF THE REVOLUTION

Philadelphia:

T. B. PETERSON, No. 98 CHESNUT STREET,  
ONE DOOR ABOVE THIRD.

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Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1848, by  
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of Pennsylvania.

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## TO MY SISTER,

HARRIET NEWELL LIPPARD.

WITH the hope that some portion of the purity and truth of your nature, may be found embodied in these pages, in the character of Catharine Ardenheim, I dedicate this book to you. I might inscribe upon this page some name indicative of worldly power, and worldly wealth, but there is no power beneath Heaven like that which derives its impulses from a Sister's Counsels—there is no wealth than can compare for a moment, with the priceless treasure of a Sister's Love.

When your eye for the first time rests upon this page—when you discover that without your permission or knowledge, I have written your name at the head of these lines—I beseech to regard the act as a word of blessing from a Brother to a Sister. Regard it thus, and at the same time accept it as a memorial of the years of Orphanage we have spent together. It is true, that with but a few exceptions, the name we bear, is only borne by those who sleep their last in the silence of the grave. I write your name,—here—upon my book—and ask you to remember the days when all was dark with me; when my name was uttered with the hiss of calumnation, and my life poisoned by every slander that malice could invent, or falsehood enunciate; but, when my Sister, scarcely more than a Child in years, was my friend—almost the only friend I had on the earth of God—when she stood by me, with the counsels of a Sister's Love, and said in face of cloud and danger—"Brother! God-speed!"

GEORGE LIPPARD.

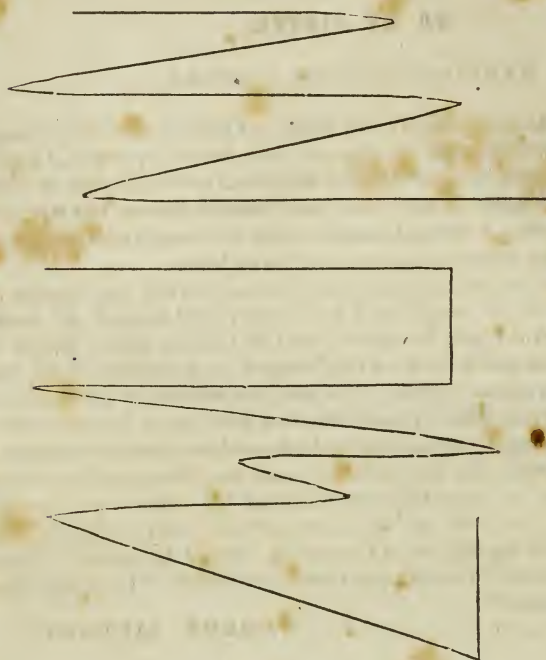
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## PROLOGUE.

THE author was aided in the preparation of this work, by a series of papers, letters, and other MSS. relating to the events and men of our Revolution, and especially to certain incidents, connected with the Wissahikon, near Philadelphia. The incidents detailed in the MSS. were of a remarkable and various character; presenting at one view, a picture of the home-life, the battles, and superstitions of olden time. Some portions of the MSS. were written in a cipher, not only difficult, but utterly untranslatable, at least, without a key. As the pages in cipher occurred in the most interesting points of the narrative, and seemed from the context to picture not only events which took place in '75, '77 and '78 on the Wissahikon, but also events of other lands, and of distant centuries, the author was exceedingly anxious to discover the key to this secret writing. The



reader will appreciate the difficulty when he beholds a specimen of the untranslatable Cipher : or, perhaps, Cryptograph would be a better word.



At first sight, this of course, looked like nothing but a scrawl, without object or meaning, but as entire pages were written in the same manner—as there seemed to be something like *system*, in the very *irregularity* of the *lines* and their *angles*,—curiosity was excited, and the most strenuous exertions made to discover the meaning of some particular part, and thus construct a key for the whole. After much effort, the characters given above were discovered to represent the word—“MOUNT SEPULCHRE.” The translation of the Cipher was then accomplished without much difficulty. The passage in which the word “Mount Sepulchre” occurred was first translated; and the author discovered that it was a quotation from some unknown Manuscript, entitled “THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE SEALED CHAMBER,” written by a Monk, in the Reign of the Eighth Henry, and connected with the events of the Wissahikon, by a thread of peculiar and important incidents.

The first passage translated from the Cipher was in substance as follows :

"In order that these things which appear to you so strange, may be in some measure accounted for, I subjoin a passage from the MANUSCRIPT OF THE SEALED CHAMBER (written as you know in the reign of Henry VIII., by Prior Eustace) which connects the incidents of the present history, with an almost incredible tragedy, which happened more than two hundred years ago."

Then followed the passage from the MSS. of the Sealed Chamber, which is subjoined with some modifications of style, language, etc. although the Spirit of the Original is preserved.

"MOUNT SEPULCHRE."

"You cannot picture to yourself a nobler image of Feudal grandeur, than that which was embodied in the Castle of Mount Sepulchre.

(Even I that write these words, 'Father Eustace' once, and 'Prior of the Monastery,' near the Castle, but now plain Eustace Brynne, even I, that know so well the terrible deeds enacted in the Castle, can scarce believe that a scene so fair to the eye, was ever made the theatre of such unnatural crimes.)

The traveller who might chance to journey through the woods of Yorkshire, suddenly emerged from the shadows, and stood upon a rock which overhung a magnificent prospect of woods, and hills, and valleys, with tranquil waters gleaming here and there, like the shattered fragments of a great mirror framed in emerald.

And in the midst of this prospect, nay, in the very foreground, arose the grand old castle of Mount Sepulchre.

A massive hill rose suddenly from the bosom of a forest. It was a wide forest, full of oaken trees, whose woven branches shut out the sun, and invested the turf with a rich twilight shadow. It was a wide forest, and, yet standing upon the jutting rock, you might behold a wide expanse of green meadows; and luxuriant orchards, abrupt hills and vallies threaded by silver streams stretching beyond the limits of this forest to the far distant horizon. Then, there were mansions too, breaking suddenly upon the sight—here a fortified grange standing amid oaken trees on the summit of a gentle hill, there a farm-house, lifting its gray walls from orchard trees, and on the slope of some meadow dotted with sleek cattle, the sombre towers of a Monastery, rushed suddenly on the view.

But, in the midst of this varied and beautiful prospect—the noblest thing which met the eye—arose the old Castle of Mount Sepulchre.

It stood alone on the summit of that broad hill which arose from the bosom of the forest. It was a strange structure presenting at once to your sight massive walls, and lofty towers; here a slender pillar like the minaret of a Pagan Mosque, pierced the blue sky, with its banner of white, and gold floating into Heaven, and there a huge mass of dark stone rose in the sunlight, with the green vines trailing about its windows, and flowers fluttering from its gloomy parapet.

In fact, the Castle of Mount Sepulchre presented at a glance, a gorgeous combination of Gothic and Oriental Architecture. As you gazed upon it from the jutting crag, it seemed as though the spirits of the Eastern and the Western world had met in this beautiful valley of England, and reared this magnificent pile, as a trophy of their combined skill.

Many ages ago—when the third Richard was in the land—this Castle was only a stern image of dark stone, with four rude towers rising into heaven, and cell-like windows indenting the surface of its sombre walls.

Then, a solid wall encircled the base of the hill, with a gate rising to the west, and beyond this wall a wide and deep moat, separated the hill from the surrounding woods.

But the Lord of Mount Sepulchre followed King Richard, the Lion Heart to the wars of Palestine, and were thousands only fought to win a grave, he fought and won more fame, more titles and more gold.

Therefore returning from the holy wars, he added new lands to the domain of the Castle. He hung around its gloomy walls the fantastic glories of Oriental architecture, and between the sombre walls Pagan minarets arose, and where had been dark courts paved with unsightly stone, new gardens bloomed, their flowers and foliage fluttering about the old castle, like rich drapery around a rugged warrior's breast.

This Lord of the day of Richard, the Lion-Heart, even changed the name of the castle: it had been called by the rude Gothic name of his ancestors, but in memory of the Holy wars,—perchance in memory of the Sacred Tomb of Christ—he called it Mount Sepulchre.

And so, as you see it now in the reign of Henry the Eighth, our glorious King, he left the Castle to his heir, and lies buried in a Chapel somewhere amid the mazes of yonder Castle, a Chapel which resembles a Pagan Mosque, with its mosaic pavement, its swelling dome, and quaintly fashioned lamps, even burning over altars of sculptured marble.

We will stand upon this jutting rock, and trace the features of this Castle by the light of the summer day.

It crowns the summit of the hill, with its towers and pillars gleaming in the sun.

The base of the hill is still encircled by a heavy wall, but that wall is adorned with towers, and two massive pillars crowned by long and tapering spires, mark the position of the castle gate.

Beyond this wall, which encircles a space of twenty acres or more, in fact, girdles the entire hill, there is no longer an unsightly moat filled with stagnant water, but a stream of silver, which flows from the woods in the west, winds around the wall like a belt of shining silver beside a belt of iron, and then disappears in the woods toward the east.

The space between the castle on top of the hill, and the wall at its base, is diversified with gardens, divided by walks fantastically arranged, and adorned with shrubbery and flowers of almost every clime. It seems



indeed, like a garden stolen by some enchanter from the valley of the Arno, and set down on English soil amid the scenes of Yorkshire.

The Baron of Mount Sepulchre can gaze from the loftiest tower of his Castle, and turn his eyes to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south, exclaiming as he turns, "This—and this—all that I behold is mine!"

For he is a powerful lord, high in favor with our Sovereign Lord, Henry the Eighth, who the other day sat aside his Spanish Queen, and took to his arms a New Queen, in the person of the witching maiden, Anne Boleyn. It will be remembered that at the same time, he took to his bed a New Queen, he also took to his Altar a new Religion. He set aside the Pope, and now reigns at once Pope and King, with the power to set aside as many queens and religions as it shall please his dread Majesty.

The Lord Harry Mount Sepulchre of Mount Sepulchre is not only a powerful Lord, but he is young, gallant and fair to look upon. Only twenty-four years of age, with a form of iron and a fair face, shaded by golden hair, he can wield a sword, back a steed, or win a peasant maid, with any Lord in Christendom.

He is the Last of his Race—the last of the Mount Sepulchres, and yet, he has taken no bride to his lordly bed. Rich with the possessions of his race, richer with the gifts and favor of the King, he cares not to load his young heart with the chains of wedlock, or darken his gay bachelor life with the frown of some jealous dame.

Would I might pierce the castle walls, and show him to you as he sits at the head of the well-loaded board, goblet in hand, with the faces of some score of gay lords like himself echoing his merry jests, and copying his courtly smiles.

He is the last of his race, and yet, his father the old Lord is not dead. In yonder gloomy tower, which separates itself from the body of the castle, and mocks the glad summer with its sullen grandeur, sits an old man, very old, in faith, with the snows of ninety winters upon his white beard.

Many years ago he was stricken at once with palsy, and with blindness. It was soon after his eldest son, a dark-haired boy, who loved the book better than the sword, and the air of the woods better than the perfumed atmosphere of the Count,—left the Castle suddenly for other lands, without once bidding Lord Hubert farewell.

For many years the old man awaited the return of his Son. He had heard of him from various parts of Europe, now from Hungary, now from Italy, and again from Spain. But, the eldest son never returned. He was a wanderer upon the face of the earth; the old Baron knew not wherefore, but sat looking day after day from the tower of his castle, turning his eyes to every quarter of the horizon, in the hope to behold his returning Son.



“When Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre returns, and takes upon himself the sway of the Castle and its domains, then I can die in peace.”

Ranulph was the name of his dark-haired Son.

Long the old man waited—not a day shone, but found him in the tower waiting for his eldest born. But Ranulph never came.

One day there came a messenger with a letter, which enclosed a lock of hair. It was dark hair, with a thread of silver turned among its blackness. The old Baron looked upon the lock of hair, read the letter and knew that his eldest born was dead. Ranulph had been killed in a duel in Florence—his ashes slept beside the Arno.

Blindness smote the old man’s eyeballs, palsy withered his limbs—he sits even now, mourning in the old tower, his white beard descending over his gaunt chest—he sits alone with his blindness, his disease and his ninety years, while his gay Son, Lord Harry Mount Sepulchre holds high festival in the great hall of the castle.

It will be remembered, that in consequence of the age, the blindness—shall I say idiocy—of the old Baron, Lord Harry had been invested with all his rights and powers as Supreme Lord of Mount Sepulchre, even before his father was dead. This had been done by our gracious Lord King Henry, who having power to set aside queens and religions at his pleasure, certainly has the right to invest an heir with all that pertains to Lordship, even before the old man his father is gathered into the grave vault.

And merry are the days of the young Lord in his castle, and joyous are his nights; care comes not to chill his ardent heart, neither can the anger of living man make his soul afraid.

He spends his days and nights bravely with his redoubted Twenty-Four.

His redoubted Twenty-Four! Yes, for he hath gathered to himself, from country and from Court, nay, even from lands beyond the Sea, Twenty-Four noble Knights, who know no altar but a well-filled table, no God save a brimming Cup. They share his gold, they partake of his pleasures; when he wiles some buxom peasant maid with his dainty tongue they laugh, and when he points to them a man who hath done him wrong—they kill.

A merry time they have together, Lord Harry and his Twenty-Four. By day they hunt over hill and plain, with mettled steeds and baying hounds; at night the wine-cup and the board, with now and then a pleasure, that might suit the luxurious gloom of an Eastern Seraglio, but does not befit a page like mine to tell.

Oftentimes at dead of night they issue forth from the castle gates, mounted on fiery steeds and with torches in their hands, go thundering through the silent country, like so many devils on devils’ steeds.

The peasant sleeping on his rude cot after the hard day’s toil, starts up

at the sound of their horses tramp, but ere he can look from his window they are gone. Now and then, a knight madder than the rest, flings his blazing torch into some farmer's hayrick, and the band go dashing and tramping on their way, by a light more vivid than the sun. Then, how their shouts echo through the woods as the hayrick fires the farmer's home, and forces the rude peasant and his dame, with the little child upon her bosom, from their slumbers !

O, they are in faith, a merry band, Lord Harry and his brave Twenty-Four.

In the depths of the wood, not far from the castle hill, stands a gloomy fabric, whose dismantled walls makes the wayfarer turn aside, even by the light of day, and grow cold with fear at dead of night.

This deserted fabric was not long ago a Monastery tenanted by an idle swarm of monks and nuns, but, our Lord King Henry took a new wife, and a new Religion, and therefore our Lord Baron Harry went forth not long ago, near the break of day, and \_\_\_\_\_ but 'tis a long story, and I have not time to tell it now.

It is said they had a merry time scourging the affrighted monks through smoke and flame. As for the nuns, some were old, and they turned them forth upon the night into the rude world. Some were young and fair to look upon, and the brave Twenty-Four took them on their saddles to the castle, and——

It made a great stir among the peasants of the Baron's domain. Some affrighted ones with their garments torn, and the marks of rude hands upon their breasts were found, after a lapse of three or four days wandering in the forests, startling the stillness with their ravings, and uttering the name of Lord Harry coupled with curses.

But they were nuns.

It is also said that the peasant talks in low tones of the good old times, when old Baron Hubert held the sway, and his dark-eyed son came kindly to their cottages, and broke bread at their tables, yes, broke bread even with these, the rude peasant people.

There is a prophecy among these base born folks, that one day Lord Ranulph will return and unseat his younger Brother from the saddle, and assume the rule of the broad domains of Mount Sepulchre. But 'tis only a vague superstition of these vassals, who are born for the good pleasure of such Lords as the brave Harry, and such Kings as the high and mighty Henry, the Eighth of his name, sovereign of England and France, Defender of the Faith and Pope of the New Religion.

The sun is getting low in the heaven. There are broad shadows over the distant fields, and the base of the castle hill is lost in twilight, while the pillars and towers far above, shine through the clear air like columns of living flame.

We will descend from this jutting rock which overlooks the prospect, and enter the grand old castle of Mount Sepulchre.

To night, at set of sun, the brave Harry and his bold Twenty-Four hold high festival in the Hall of Palestine.

And to-night, Lord Harry leaves the wine-cup to visit the old man, who sits blind and moaning in yonder tower, and from the old man's cell he goes to hold communion with the dark-visaged Italian, who but a few days since came to Mount-Sepulchre with his youthful page. 'Tis said the Italian is a Scholar—poor—and therefore a Sorcerer. As for his page, 'tis said that——but our history will tell it all.

Little did they think, even Lord Harry, the Italian and the Page, that the sun which shone so brightly over Mount Sepulchre as it sunk below the horizon, would not rise again until the Three were linked together, in a Crime that makes the blood grow chill but to remember.

The festival begins ; let us enter the Castle gate.

Thus reads the first passage of the MSS. of the Sealed Chamber. The reader will find the Sequel embodied in the pages of the present work ; in connection with the events which took place on the Wissahikon, in the years '75, '77 and '78. It will be seen that so far as our history is concerned, a chain of peculiar incidents connects our Revolution with the Reign of Henry VIII,—the Wissahikon with the hills of Yorkshire.

With regard to "Paul Ardenheim, the Monk of Wissahikon," not a word more in the way of preface is necessary. The book is now before the reader ; it has been with the author for years, always, and in every stage of its progress, a book which he wrote from love of the subject. That subject comprises the lights and the shadows, the superstition and the heroisms of our Past, and moreover covers ground hitherto untrodden—the influence which the German mind manifested in the case of the early settlers has exerted upon the history of Pennsylvania, and the cause of human progress.

To all gentlemen of a critical turn,—especially gentlemen who are witty in small papers, and profound in fashion-plate magazines—it is simply necessary to say, that this is the **MOST IMPROBABLE BOOK IN THE WORLD**. It is to be hoped that this statement on the part of the author, will be perfectly satisfactory, to all those gentlemen whose object is never to read a book, but simply to misrepresent its contents, and bark at its author.

One word to readers of a different kind—readers who are willing to read a book with something of the spirit in which it was written.

A Dream has been lingering about my heart for years—a dream whose lights and shadows, strong contrasts and deep passions, I have found embodied, in actual form, in the rocks and hills, the streamlet and the gorge of Wissahikon. That Dream I have attempted to put on paper, and called it "Paul Ardenheim."



BOOK THE FIRST.

THE LAST NIGHT.

“I will send a Deliverer to this land of the New World, who shall save my people from physical bondage, even as my Son saved them from the bondage of spiritual death.”





## CHAPTER FIRST.

### THE WARNING.

NIGHT came slowly down upon the wintry scene, as the travellers, turning from the road, entered the narrow lane, which led toward the wood-hidden stream.

It was a winter evening, sad and beautiful as a pure angel, looking from heaven upon the crimes and agonies of Man.

Do you behold the scene ?

Come—by this oaken tree, which stands beside the rude fence, built of intermingled timber and stone—we will stand and gaze upon the valley, bathed in the tender solemnity of winter twilight.

There is snow upon these hills ; a white mantle glitters like a shining shroud over the valley. The western sky is one soft mass of purple and gold ; it glows as with the last impassioned kiss of day. And up, into that sky, so pure, so transparent and serene, the leafless trees raise their dark branches.

Not a cloud in the dome, nothing to mar that vast expanse of blue, blushing into gold. The very air is full of rest, a deep repose, scarcely broken by a slight breeze—so keen, so bitter cold—which seems to skim over the frozen snow, and hover near it, as it scatters the shining particles in the light of the darkening day.

The lane leads through the valley, winding along the ridge, above the frozen streamlet in the east. And above that frozen streamlet, on the knoll which towers in the east, the dark grey walls of a cluster of buildings, grow crimson in the flush of the western sky. Look upon them—are they not beautiful ? A rugged farm-house, seen through the branches of some leafless trees ; a mill, built of huge logs, with the icicles glittering like diamonds on its motionless wheel ; a corn-crib with the golden ears peeping from its snow-white bars.

This is the view toward the east, but in the north, the course of the lane is lost to view, amid the dark mass of rocks and woods. Do not turn your eye from these rocks and woods, nor pass them by as devoid of interest, for they shelter the WISSAHIKON.

They shroud from your sight that stream, which bears the name of a love-maddened Indian girl, who buried her love and her wrongs in its clear waters. By those strange waters we will discover the scenes—the men and the women—of this, our Solemn History.

For it is a solemn history, telling in every page of the strong agonies of love, fanaticism and madness ; now gliding in the solemn chambers, where a secret brotherhood celebrate their rites, and passing again into the cheerful glow of an olden time fire-side. Think not that it is a history of my own production. Think not that I have but sat me down, on this drear winter night, to tell an idle romance, to coin a marvellous fable—no ! I but write again the dark story which is already written, on many a dusky and blotted page—dusky with age, and blotted with tears.

I am but the translator of that dread story, which has been recorded in mystic ciphers, for seventy years. It is my task to give the ciphers, which look so unmeaning and sometimes appear so grotesque, the tongue and language of every-day life. And when the shadows of this history gloom terribly before you, and its phantoms rouse wild and contending emotions in your hearts, and the words which fall from their weird lips, sound in your ears like the words of the dead, do not too harshly blame, I beseech you, the wizard craft of the author, who has only invoked—not created—these Ghosts of the Past.

Along this valley, at the hour of sunset, on the last day of the year of our Lord, 1774, two travellers took their way. As their footsteps broke the frozen snow, their faces were bathed in the mild light of the winter evening.

It needed no second glance to tell you the relation which these wayfarers bore to each other. They were Master and Servant.

It is true you gained no knowledge of this fact, from survey of their garb. They were attired alike in the costume of humble toil.

The youngest of the two, not more than twenty years in age, was at least six feet in stature. His step was firm and graceful ; his coarse garb could not hide the muscular beauty of his chest, nor altogether veil the round proportions of his sinewy limbs. From his cap of coarse grey fur, waving masses of light brown hair floated in the light. His complexion was light, sanguine, almost florid, and his features firm and regular in their well-defined outlines. As he turned to the western sky, you might discern the colour of his eyes by the fading light. They were clear, large and brilliant, and in color, trembled between a deep azure and midnight black.

As he walked along the narrow lane—clad in a coat of coarse grey cloth reaching to the knees and buttoned to the throat—his manly figure cast its distinct shadow far over the mantle of glittering snow.

The elder wayfarer presented a strange contrast to his young and handsome companion, or, to speak more correctly, his Master. There was something intensely ludicrous in his look, his gait, the outline of his form, the very twinkle of his small black eyes.

That outline, described on the frozen snow, was in itself a grotesque



picture. Imagine a round paunch, supported by long and spider-like legs ; arms whose excessive length is only matched by their intense want of flesh ; hands huge and bony ; high shoulders, surmounted by a small face, red as a cherry, round as an apple, with a wide mouth, small nose, and diminutive eyes, shining like flame-sparks amid laughing wrinkles.

This was the servant, clad like his master, wearing the same garb, a fur cap precisely similar, and yet presenting in every outline a contrast so laughable. To complete the picture, you must not permit a single lock of hair to wander from beneath that cap. No ! The grey fur is drawn tightly over the forehead, while beneath it—like a beacon—shines the red, round face.

In the calm silence of that winter evening they journeyed on, their faces bathed in the same mellow light, their long shadows trembling over the snow. The red-faced servant beguiled the way, with many singular substitutes for conversation, but dared not speak. His master had forbidden him to unclothe his enormous mouth. Therefore, while the young man, with a stout oaken staff in hand, strode steadily on, his eyes fixed upon the ground, a sombre thought stealing over his face—the servant amused himself by a sort of dumb show, that gave a deeper grotesqueness to his round face and spider-like form. He walked like a man afflicted with a distressing lameness ; he inflated his round cheeks, until they seemed ready to burst ; he rolled his eyes in their sockets, and distorted his mouth, until his face resembled a frog in the agonies of a galvanic spasm ; and last of all, placing one hand on his hip, and twisting one leg into a serpentine shape, he advanced with the graceful gait of a belated Muscovy duck. Still the young Master did not pay the least attention to his antics, nor suffer his eyes to wander to the ridiculous mimic who limped at his side.

Presently they stand on the verge of yonder bridge of dark stone, which spans the narrow streamlet. Two roads meet beside the bridge ; one, the continuation of the lane, winds around yonder cluster of cottages and skirts the mill-dam, which, framed in woods, sparkles before us. The other road, a narrow path, rough with deep ruts, and scarcely wide enough for the passage of two horses, when journeying abreast, leads over the little stone bridge, and is lost to view on yonder hill-top, among the ever-green pines.

“ Which road, *John*—” said the servant, venturing at last to break the silence, and laying a strange emphasis on the Italicized word.

“ Over the bridge, and up among the pines. It is the nearest to the farm-house.”

They crossed the bridge and rapidly approached the shadows. In a moment they will have passed from the soft glow of the twilight into the darkness of the hill-side, where the pines, almost touching from either side, and depending from the high banks, enclosed the road as in two high and almost contiguous walls.



"We are near the Wissahikon, Jacob—" the young master began.

"*Jacopo*, if you please," whispered the servant, with a peculiar contortion ; "In Italy we were called *Jacopo—Jacopo*, you remember ! Hang *Jacob*. It's low, and smells like a greasy penny. *Jacopo* has a silvery sound."

"We are near the Wissahikon, *Jacopo*. Near the farm-house—you understand ? What course do you advise ? In a few moments we will be there—"

The young man hesitated, as though afraid to trust his voice with the thought of his heart. He cast his eyes along the dark and narrow pass, and seemed to feel the silence and shadow that brooded in those thick pines, among those grey rocks. In that gloom, even the cherry-ripe face of Jacob, or *Jacopo*, as the reader pleases, grew sad, and his beacon-like nose lost its freshness.

"What course ? Can it be possible that you ask me ? A beautiful pair of ankles, a fine bust, an eye like a star after a shower, and a cheek like a peach with the sun shining on its ripest side—Bah ! What have you been doing for this month back ? In Italy—*Corpo di Bacco !* (Fine oath that !)—we managed these things much better——"

"Come to the point, *Jacopo*," and the master touched the servant with his oaken staff.

"I'm coming. Give me time. Here you have been for a whole month, wasting your time in toying with this forest damsel, when——"

The pass grew darker. Some few paces ahead, a belt of light broke through an aperture among the trees, and glowed brightly upon the summit of a solitary rock.

"When ?" echoed the young master, laying his hand upon his servant's arm.

*Jacopo* halted ; the strange expression of his small black eye,—that leer, half-comical, half-satanic—were visible even in the gloom.

"*When a few grains of white powder, quietly mixed in a cup of wine, would do the work of a whole year of boyish courtship—*"

"What mean you ?" The voice of John sounded deep and hollow through the silence of the pass.

"You remember Florence ? She was a proud lady that—but—Pshaw ! You know how it happened, when we were in Italy. And this is but a Peasant Girl !"

These incoherent words and broken hints had a powerful effect upon the young man. You see his nether lip move tremulously ; his bright eye grow brighter, his broad chest heave like a wave.

"That was a proud lady, *Jacopo*, who first loved, then scorned me—" he gasped. "But *Madeline—*"

"'But *Madeline*,'" mimicked the servant, speaking in a dolorous nasal tone—"A peasant girl. Lives on this out-of-the-way stream they call

Wissahikon—or Wiskeysikeen—or some such name. We come from Philadelphia, disguised as a *merchant's clerk*. We visit the farm-house, meet the little girl in the woods, and talk romance by the dozen. We—that is you, Mister *John*—spend our time, in saying soft nonsense, when we should trap the little bird, and cage it, without a moment's delay. Bah! I'm ashamed of you, John. We managed these things much better in Italy."

As he spoke, a strange vision broke upon the wayfarers' eyes. They started back—stood spell-bound with involuntary terror.

They had reached the rock, over whose rugged brow broke the last glow of the winter's day. It stood alone, a bright thing among the dark pines, its crest shining like gold.

On that crest arose a shapeless and uncouth figure. Was it a man, or some strange beast, perched before them on the summit of the lonely rock? It rose before them, a stunted figure, with arms folded over its broad chest, an uncouth hump rising above its shoulders, long hair and beard, waving black and straight in the winter wind. Two eyes, bright as flaming coals, glared from that hideous, half-human visage, with waving hair above, and streaming beard below.

The travellers saw those thin lips move, they felt the vivid light of those eyes, and between them and the light, right across their path, a long arm, with bony fingers, was extended.

"Go back!" a voice was heard speaking through the intense silence which had fallen upon the pass—"Go back! Heir of a noble house—last man of an illustrious race—I stand in your path, and warn ye back from this soil. Back, I say, and never let your footsteps press this sod again. There is danger for you here. That word Wissahikon means death and judgment to your race. Even now, in England your father prays for the safe return of his son—and here you come to plot the ruin of an innocent woman, and grasp your death over her dishonored corse!"

The echo of that hollow voice died away; the travellers looked up; the rock was there, glowing in the light, but the uncouth shape had vanished like a dream.

It is plainly to be seen, even through the gathering gloom of the hill-side pass, that these words of omen, uttered by the apparition, which appeared for a moment only, on the crest of the rock, had their own effect—strange and deadening—upon the minds of the wayfarers.

Jacopo sank on his knees, and began to pray in four or five languages. Having exhausted the calendar of Catholic saints, implored the assistance of Martin Luther, and other reformers, he concluded with the emphatic ejaculation—

"Devil help me! We didn't see any thing like this in Italy!"

John tottered forward, and leaned against the rock, while the cold dew stood on his forehead.

"Here it stood—that horrible phantom—" he madly pressed the cold rock with his hands—"Here—and warned me back——"

The words died on his lips. Something there was in the gathering night of that forest to impress his heart with awe; but even yet, he saw it, distinctly pictured in the twilight air, that phantom of a deformed man, with the face of a human being, the cold lustrous eyes of a fiend.

"Come, Jacopo," he faltered, "we will go back! This is an unholy adventure. Up, man! Do you not see, that the very Devil warns us to retrace our steps!"

Jacopo, still on his knees, glanced about him, with a nervous fear.

"Let us forward to the farm-house. 'The night is cold as Iceland, and we'll freeze to death. Come, my lord——"

"Fool! Dare you breathe that title in these woods? Have I not commanded you? Remember, knave—" he finished the sentence by a hearty admonition, administered on the cheek, with the palm of his hand.

Then, as if ashamed of his recent emotion, he led the way through the darkness——

"Come! I am going to the farm-house. Madeline awaits me!"

Followed by his trembling servant, the young man urged his way over the snow, and among the withered leaves, while above, the thickly clustering pines extended their canopy, blacker than the midnight without a star.

Soon emerging from the shadows, they stood upon the verge of a hill, with the sublime panorama of the twilight hour spread before them. Above, that cloudless dome, deepening every moment into a more intense azure. Beneath, a wide waste of woods, stretched grey and dark under the twilight sky. And over that vague mass, just where it touched the horizon, far in the west, hung a solitary star, glittering in lonely glory, through the silent universe.

A low, musical murmur sounded through the night. It came through the woods, echoing from the shadows which no eye might penetrate. It was the voice of an impetuous rivulet, forcing its way among the rocks of ice and rocks of granite. It was the Wissahikon.

Through the leafless trees, came one long and trembling ray of light, shining like a golden arrow over the frozen snow.

"It is the farm-house!" cried Jacopo, twirling his arms in grotesque delight—"That's something like! Ah! I smell the good things already—I see the fire—that hearty, good-humored fire—I inhale the incense of the sausages! Come, John, let us forward!"

Winding along a foot-path, that led through the valley, over a frozen brooklet, and up the opposite hill, they soon came in sight of the farm-house.

It was a massive edifice, built of alternate logs and stone, two stories in height, with a steep roof and some five chimneys, of which the largest, sent into the sky a rolling mass of smoke. It was a quaint structure alto-



gether, the windows narrow and low, the porch before the door, fashioned of rough cedar, the steep roof cumbered with many rude ornaments along the projecting eaves.

It stood—singular as it may seem—in the lowest part of a circular hollow, which seemed to have been scooped out from the surrounding woods.

On one side the portly barn, looking, for all the world, like a rich and self-complacent citizen retired from the business of active life, and given up at once to meditation and corpulence. On the other side arose a giant horse-chesnut tree, with ponderous trunk and many and far-reaching branches. Near the barn, on one side of the enclosures of the cattle-yard, the corn-crib was seen, packed to bursting with the ears of golden maize.

Along the lane, which led to the farm-house door, a line of vehicles was discernible, with the horses attached to them, carefully tied to the rail fence. Vehicles of every shape and pattern, from the massive farmer's wagon, whose sides had often groaned under the heavy load of corn and hay, to the quaint gig—sulky or calash—which shall we call it?—that wonderful affair, with a top like a Monk's cowl, and a seat perched high on springs, in which the village Doctor made his circuit among the sick and suffering of the country-side.

From afar, the light of the fireside flashed through the farm-house windows, out upon the starlight night. An air of Sabbath repose imbued the scene,—yet hold! strains of music break on the silence, music from an old fiddle, in the hands of the blind Negro in the chimney corner. There is a festival in the farm-house to-night. From far and near the country people have come, to sing and dance and drink together, and send the old year to his grave, with a chorus of boisterous joy.

In the summer-time, this farm-house is a pleasant sight to look upon.

Say, in the month of June, when the air seems like a breeze from Paradise, and the Wissahikon goes singing on, among the trees that dip into it, among the oaks that shadow it, among the flowers that tremble above it, ready to fall and bless its waters with their white bosoms—say, in the month of June, have you ever seen the farm-house, framed in the drapery of leaves and blossoms?

The horse-chesnut stretches forth its arms, clothed with broad leaves—deep and rich in their virgin green—and shelters the steep roof, scattering, all the while, its snowy blossoms around the porch below.

There is a wild honeysuckle trailing over the dark timbers of the porch, and the very lane, leading from the woods to the door, is enclosed in its green hedges, two winding walls of leaves and buds and flowers. Then the roof of the barn stands boldly out from the background of the forest, and the fields around, tufted with grass, spread their carpet in the smile of the summer sky—that sky, which only wears a deeper blue, when the clouds sweep over it, unfolding their bosoms to the sun.



Thus, in summer-time, smiles the quaint farm-house, a dark image framed in freshness and verdure.

But now that dark image only looks more dark and dreary, as the gloom of its walls is contrasted with the roof, covered with snow. The fields around are white—look! how the rays of the fireside go sparkling and shining over the white mantle which veils the sod, and shields beneath it the hidden seeds of spring.

The horse-chesnut springs with leafless branches into the blue heaven, marking each rugged limb and little branch, in black distinctness, on the clear azure. Winter is on the scene, and the woods which encircle the farm-house and its white fields are black and desolate.

At the end of the lane, our travellers stood, gazing in silence upon the prospect.

The young man, with his hands clasped on his staff, his head slightly bowed, fixed his dilating eyes upon the lighted windows of the forest home. He was silent; but even in the dim starlight, you might have seen his broad chest swell, his brilliant eye grow wild with a more intense brightness.

“Only a month since first I saw this home in the wilderness?” he murmured, and was silent again.

Only a month! And yet a great many thoughts may start into deeds in a month. Only a month! It is but a little while, the humble twelfth of the long year, and yet, in a month, *only a month*, battles may be lost and won, nations hurled from masters into slaves, and bosoms that pant beneath silk and velvet, may become cold and still under grass and sod. Only a month! And yet, in a month, the heart of a pure virgin may be robbed of its bloom; her form, the shrine of a love at once passionate and pure, become the monument of her dishonor.

“How the image of this wild forest girl has twined itself about the chords of my heart! She is innocent—she trusts in me—she is pure! To-morrow ——”

It is a terrible word, that to-morrow. It is murmured alike by the convict, taking his last sleep in the doomed cell, and by the woman, who, surrendering her purity into the arms of shame, shrieks it fearfully amid the frenzies of her guilty love.

To-morrow! Look upon the lip of the young traveller, curving in a smile; read his dilating eye, warming with a wild yet voluptuous light, and tell me what means that smile, that look? A fearful “*to-morrow*” for the wild forest girl!

The voice of Jacopo was heard:

“I would suggest in the most delicate manner in the world, my Lor—that is, MISTER JOHN—and without the least desire to appear obtrusive, that there are two of us here, one of whom—not being delighted with stars or forest girls—stands a dev’lish fine chance of being frozen to death.

Look at me, John! Did you ever see a human icicle before? Ah, it is very well to smile, but all the blood in my thin legs has rushed into my head, and from my head into my nose—Did you ever see a nose like that before?"

He placed a long and skinny finger against that intense carbuncle which formed the tip of his nose, and looked at his master with a sidelong leer.

"Come," said John, with an involuntary smile, "let us hasten to the farm-house. Madeline awaits me."

As he hurried along the lane, Jacopo crept closer to his side, and taking the arm of his master within his own, whispered these jocular words:

"Music yonder, John,—d'ye hear it? Supper too—Ah! One can smell that! And—d'ye remember—if the girl is willing, why—you have an elegant house in Philadelphia, which may be her home before morning. If she refuses—is obstinate, or stupid—why, trust the matter to me. *'A few grains of white powder, properly prepared,'* saith an ancient Philosopher, *'conveyed into the drinking-cup of an innocent maiden, will—'* D'ye hear the fiddle, John?"

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## CHAPTER SECOND.

### YOCONOK.

WITHIN the farm-house the details of a strangely interesting picture, lighted by the warmth of a capacious hearth, await us.

Yet ere we enter, we must go back to the hour of sunset, and gaze upon a far different scene.

The rays of the setting sun, streaming through the thick pines, gave their faint and uncertain light to a lonely nook in the forest of Wissahikon. It was a circular space, not more than twenty yards in diameter. The trunks of pine and fir trees, starting side by side from the sod, formed an impenetrable wall around it; their branches, meeting overhead and woven together, shadowed it like a roof. It is a silent place, enlivened only by a ray of light—that streams over the frozen snow like a golden thread, and is gone ere you can look again.

The deep green of the branches forms a strong contrast to the slight mantle of snow, which has drifted into this lonely nook.

Yonder, between those two huge trunks, you discern something, which may be the resting-place of a man, and yet looks like the lair of a wild beast.

This lair or hut, whatever you may choose to call it, is formed after the simplest style of architecture. The trunks of those trees supply the place of door-posts; the skins of wild beasts stretched from branch to branch, compose the roof; some wild moss scattered on the sod beneath, at once the bed and floor of the rude home.

Beside that hut, or lair, stands a rifle, with a stock of dark mahogany inlaid with silver.

In the centre of the scene, seated on the trunk of that fallen tree—blasted last summer by the lightning—you behold the figure of a Man.

A Man, though his dark-red visage wears the wrinkles of an hundred years. A single tuft of snow-white hair waves from the centre of his skull. A blanket, much worn and tattered, falls back from his shoulders and discloses the shrunken outlines of that once broad and sinewy chest. His thin limbs are cased in leather leggings, and he wears moccasins on his long, straight feet.

The downcast head, sunken on the chest in an attitude of stolid apathy, at once arrests our attention. The high cheek-bones, the nose curved like an eagle's beak, the bold arch of the brow, the forehead lofty in proportion to its width, all indicate an organization once full of physical and mental power.

But age has fallen on that noble head and iron form. The deep wrinkles on either side of the compressed lips, the cavernous hollow beneath each cheek-bone, the muscles of the neck, resembling cords of iron, all speak of that stern life, whose sands have been falling for an hundred years. Those sands are well-nigh run. A little while, and those dark eyes, now glaring with vacant despair upon the sod, will be darkened forever by the shadow of the falling clod.

It is an Indian that we behold. One hundred years ago he was born, in this very forest, the child of a King. Seventy years gone by, he strode this soil, and looked, with a quivering pulse, upon the forms of his dusky warriors. His wigwam was here; here his squaw, with the brown cheek and sad, deep eyes, and his child, encased in its rude cradle, quivered in its slumber upon yonder tree.

They are all gone now. His race has passed; they are forgotten by the strange white race, who now people the woods, and rear their stone wigwams on the plain.

Of all his race, he is the Last.

Think of the powerful People, who walked these woods an hundred years ago—the smoke of their wigwams rising from every dell, the gleam of their many-colored wampum belts seen from every hill-top—and then behold this stern image of their Destiny——

—An old man, withered by the long winter of an hundred years, seated alone in the silent forest, suffering at once from intense hunger and cold, and dying by inches!——



Go to the white man's home, and beg for bread ! The old Indian is too proud for that, even though no morsel has passed his lips for two days. He will die—Hark ! you hear that low murmur from his thin, cold lips ?

It is the Death-Song of Yoconok, the last of his tribe.

He will die,—alone,—desolate as the winter which howls around him—but die proud and uncomplaining.

“ Ghosts of my fathers, hear my voice, for it is your child, it is Yoconok that calls !

“ The old man is cold—no corn, no fire ! But he is coming, Fathers of the Red Men—he is coming to the happy hunting-grounds, he is coming to the land of Manitto ! He is cold now, but soon he will be warmed by the sun that never shines upon winter or snow ! He is hungry, the old warrior, but there, the deer wander without ceasing, through woods whose greenness never dies !

“ You are there, my fathers. Yoconok sees you, as you stand upon the high mountain, which guards the happy hunting-grounds. The sunlight is upon your faces. The smoke of the calumet encircles your heads. Yoconok sees you all—he is coming ! There, the squaw of Yoconok, there his child—his People—all ! Ghosts of my fathers, sing the song of the war-path, for Yoconok is coming to the happy land, where the sun never sets, and the leaf never dies !”

Thus, in our imperfect way, have we endeavored to translate the stern and simple death-song of the old Indian chief. When he spoke in the tongue of the pale face, his words were few and grotesque, but in his own tongue, the language of his fathers, Yoconok was eloquent. Look upon him now, with that glassy eye brightening into new life, that chest throbbing with quick pulsations, that brow raised proudly in the wandering gleam of the setting sun !

Fired with that last impulse of life, he started to his feet and seized the rifle, and stood erect, with his chest thrown forward, as if in the act of confronting a mortal foe. His eye was lighted with fire of forty years ago, his nostrils quivered with a quick nervous motion.

“ Yoconok is on the war-path once more ! Let the foe come—the old warrior is young again—he knows no fear !”

It was a glorious picture in the history of the Red Man ; that solitary nook, walled and roofed by trees, mantled with a slight covering of snow, with the dying warrior erect in the centre, his chest bared, his arm raised in the act of battle.

But it was only for a moment. The impulse died away, and the old warrior sank helpless and exhausted upon the blasted tree. The rifle was in his grasp, but his arm was nerveless, his sight dim and fast failing.

As he sank upon the log, the blanket falling from his shoulders, he murmured in his Indian tongue —

"She was the only friend of the old warrior, but she comes to the wigwam no more. The White Doe dwells in the home of the pale face. When Yoconok was sick, the White Doe came—when he was cold, she built his fire—her hands fed him, when the old man could go forth on the hunting-path no more. But Yoconok is dying, and the White Doe comes not. The warrior is forgotten; the home of the pale face has fire and water. The wigwam of Yoconok is dark!"

Chilled by the intense cold, fevered by the want of food, the old warrior sank exhausted and insensible on the log. His eyes were glassy; his arms hung nerveless by his side.

There was a step upon the snowy moss—a light, soft-echoing step, like the rustling of a withered leaf. From an interval between the trees, toward the west, the form of a woman appeared, and a woman's face looked in upon the gloom of the lonely covert.

A wandering ray of sunlight shone over her brown hair, and gleamed upon her humble garb, as she stood, with her hands raised in a gesture of surprise and alarm.

She was a girl of not more than eighteen years, clad in the boddice and coarse linsey skirt, which formed the costume of a peasant woman, in the early days of Pennsylvania. Yet that boddice displayed the outline of a full bosom, and from beneath that coarse skirt appeared two small feet encased in rude moccasins.

From the folds of the brown cloak, which hung from her shoulders, her round bare arms were visible, with a glimpse of the white neck and fairer bosom rising slowly into view.

"Yoconok!" she cried, and, springing along the sod, stood over the insensible chief.

The sunlight, gushing suddenly through an opening in the boughs, lighted up her face, while her form and the figure of the old man were wrapt in soft shadow.

In that sudden light, which played over her brown cheeks, and shone upon the unbound masses of her chesnut hair, the face of the young girl looked like the countenance of a virgin saint, encircled in a glory.

"Yoconok!" she cried, in the Indian tongue, "awake! the White Doe is here—she has not forgotten you! She brings you food—ah!" she exclaimed, in English, "he does not hear me, he is dead—"

Her voice seemed to call back to the old warrior's heart, the last impulse of life. His glassy eyes glowed with faint lustre; his motionless lips were unclosed again.

"Good!" he muttered in English, with a deep guttural accent—"Mad'-lin?—White Doe—Good!"

It would have made your heart beat quicker, to behold the angel-like tenderness of that brown-cheeked maiden.

"You are cold, Yoconok"—and she pressed his chilled hands to her

warm bosom, and wound the blanket around his shoulders. Then sinking beside him, she drew some corn bread from the small basket which she carried on her arm, but the old man could not eat.

"The fire-water!" he cried, clutching her cloak, as he pointed to his throat. "Yoconok is dry—Yoconok has not drank for two days—"

"I have forgotten the flask!" she exclaimed, as she tossed the contents of the basket on the ground—"The fire-water is not good for the Red Man. It burns his heart, and puts the Evil Manitto in his veins! Wait, Yoconok—I will bring you water from the Wissahikon—"

As she whispered these words in the Indian tongue, bending her lips to his ear, a quick, pattering sound broke the deep silence of the shadowy nook.

The young girl raised her eyes and stood spell-bound with surprise.

There, not ten paces from where she stood, a wild deer was gazing in her face, with its large eyes dilating as in wonder and alarm. It was a beautiful doe, with sleek brown skin and slender and tapering limbs.

The maiden stood like a statue; the gloom shadowed her from the view of the cautious animal, while the sunlight fell like a scarf of gold over its quivering nostrils and dilating eyes.

At once the brave girl's resolution was taken.

"The old warrior has told me many a time, that the warm blood from the neck of a dying doe, will save the life of the sick and starving."

The doe gazed for a moment around the covert, with that peculiar glance of fear and alarm—its short ears quivering all the while—and then, stooping her head, began to browse the soft and fragrant moss, which started from the intervals of the snow.

Even as the doe lowered her head, the young girl raised the rifle. Her bosom heaved tremulously; it seemed a terrible sin to kill that gentle thing, which fed so innocently before her eyes.

Again the doe raised her head, again elevated her ears and gazed around, and all the while the rifle, lifted in the soft arms of the young girl, was levelled at her breast.

Her aim was not the most certain in the world, yet as she raised the rifle she murmured—"It is for Yoconok's life!" and placed her finger on the trigger.

At this moment the sunlight, shifting, played more freely over the beautiful head and graceful limbs of the doe. She stood encircled by light, while all around was twilight gloom.

"For Yoconok's life!" murmured the girl, her finger placed upon the trigger, when a sharp, quick, almost imperceptible sound echoed from the opposite side of the forest. As quick as thought, Madeline turned, and her blood grew cold.

For, glaring from the shadow of a pine branch which touched the ground two brilliant points of flame sent their rays to her very breast.



These brilliant points of flame, were the eyes of a female panther which, crouching on the snow, was about to spring upon the unconscious deer.

The young girl saw that crouching form, darkly defined on the snow-covered sod.

I need not tell you that her heart beat quickly, that her color went and came, while the rifle was grasped by arms, that seemed suddenly frozen into stone.

She could not stir; terror held her paralyzed and dumb. A moment fled! Still those fiery eyes glared from the covert; still, on the opposite side, in the sunlight browsed the unconscious doe, raising every moment her mild eyes into the sun—glancing round—and then stooping her head to feed again.

“The doe must die, or else Yoconok’s life is gone! If I kill the doe, the panther will spring upon me—if I turn the rifle upon the panther, the doe will escape!”

Thus ran her wandering thoughts; but at once she was resolved upon her course of action. While her bosom heaved in gasps, while the hands which grasped the rifle, seemed chilled in every vein, with the ice of death, she still had the presence of mind to retain her statue-like position.

Again the doe raised her head. It was for the last time. For even as her large mild eyes glittered in that passing ray of sunshine, a whizzing sound disturbed the dead silence—a dark body swept through the air, before the very eyes of the maiden—and the doe lay mangled upon the sod, its warm blood spouting over the panther’s jaws.

The maiden beheld it all. Saw the fur of the wild beast glow sleek and glossy in the sun, as, with a deep growl, she mangled the neck of the quivering deer.

The rifle was raised. Hush! That sharp, quick report; how it crashes on the silence!

Woe to the young girl now, woe to her, if her trembling aim has failed to kill. For then, the jaws of the panther, which tore the palpitating heart of the doe, will rend the bosom of the maiden, and grow crimson with her blood.

She drew the trigger, and fell swooning on the ground.

But the sound of the rifle called the old warrior back to life. As we gaze, in dumb surprise, he raises his head, starting into a sitting posture. At a glance he beholds the dying doe, with the blood smoking as it pours from the mangled throat. He does not heed the panther, which writhes upon the sod, its skull cloven by the fortunate ball.

But tottering forward, he falls upon the sod, gathers the warm body of the doe in his arms, and applies his lips to the wound in the throat. He drinks the blood—aye, pure and fresh, as it pours from the palpitating heart of the deer—he drinks the crimson current, with a mad delight.

"Ugh! Yoconok is a warrior! Yoconok will follow his foe on the war path and drink his blood!"

It was some time before the young girl unclosed her eyes. Starting from her swoon, Madeline saw that dark night had fallen upon the woods, but the light of a cheerful flame shone in her face, and baptized those giant trunks, the green canopy overhead, with a crimson glow.

She passed her hands over her eyes, and glanced hurriedly from side to side. Before her, in the centre of the covert, a mass of ponderous logs were blazing, their heat imparting a delicious temperature to the air of the place, while by her side, crouched upon the sod, his face glowing in the ruddy light, was Yoconok.

In one hand he held the calumet, from which he inhaled the peace-inspiring fumes of tobacco; in the other a piece of peeled hickory, which, inserted in a slice of venison, held the savory morsel over the hot coals.

There was a calm expression—a look of deep quiet, and dreamy composure—upon each corded wrinkle of Yoconok's withered face.

When Madeline awoke, she discovered that her head was resting on the Indian's knee. He had built the fire, and, like a kind nurse watching over a sleeping babe—placed her head upon his knee, so that the full light of the fire would shine into her face. In silence he guarded her unconscious form.

"Ugh! White Doe is good"—he said in English, as she unclosed her eyes—"White Doe kill deer. Blood save Yoconok life. Manitto told the White Doe, old man hungry, old man dying. White Doe came, Yoconok strong!"

With his fingers he tore the half-broiled venison, and devoured it with all the eagerness of famine.

Madeline rose, and placed her hand upon the Indian's shoulder, and stood in silence. The light of the fire streamed over her, and you might freely read the expression of her face, and gaze upon each waving outline of her form.

Around that face, whose rich brown hue deepened into vermilion on the full lips and swelling cheek, swept the unbound masses of her brown hair. Her eyes were large and shaded by long lashes. Their color was a soft brown, darkening sometimes into black, but always brilliant and sparkling as the stars that come forth in the purple of the twilight hour.

She was by no means tall, but that which her form lacked in height, was supplied by its full and flowing outlines.

Her shoulders are seen above the coarse boddice, and like a wave that swells without breaking, her young bosom comes gently into view.

The skirt of coarse texture which descended but a short distance below the knee, gave some indications, by its folds, of the warm beauty of the maiden's shape. Her cloak had fallen aside, and her arms glowed with the clear hues and round outlines, in the light of the fire.

Altogether, a picture more interesting in its varied details cannot be imagined. That fire, flashing over the bark of the encircling trees, and lighting up the dark green branches above. The snow blushing into crimson. Here the old Indian, a stern image of decay, seated on the earth, his arms clasped on his knees, the smoke of the pipe winding about his wrinkled features; there, a young girl clad in peasant attire, yet with a ripening bloom glowing freshly from her brown face, and waving in the outlines of her virgin form.

"You must forgive me, Yoconok"—she laid her hand upon the old warrior's arm—"For two days I have not seen you. But I have not been myself for two days. I have been wild—mad! There is a dark cloud upon the path of your White Doe."

As she spoke sadly in the dialect of the Indian, he inclined his head to one side and listened in evident anxiety.

"Does the old man hear the voice of the child—or does the White Doe speak the language of Dreams?"

Madeline crouched on the earth by his side, and clasping her hands over her form, murmured with a faltering voice—

"Yoconok is my only friend. For years his words have been life to the poor orphan girl. She comes to him now. She, who never saw the face of father or mother, who has lived all her life, by the fire of the stranger, in dependence on others, now comes to the old man for counsel.—Tell me, father, what I must do, or I will die!"

Her cheek was flushed, her bosom panting; she looked very beautiful, with her large eyes veiled in moisture. The old chief turned; something like affection shone in his lustreless eyeballs, as he placed her soft palm in his bony fingers.

"Shall the White Doe become the squaw of Gilbert the Hunter, the Man who dwells in the forest, or of this Stranger, who comes from the cities of the pale face, and has no name?"

"Yes—that is the question I would ask of you—three days since, before I fell sick, I told you the whole story——"

"The heart of the White Doe inclines to Gilbert, the Man of the Forest, but her soul wanders against her will to the Stranger who has no name?"

"Yes"—faltered Madeline—"Yes—that is it! I love Gilbert; we were children together; I have always loved him. But this stranger, who, a month ago, appeared for the first time in our farm-house—ah! His eye deprives me of all power; his voice fills me with a wild terror! Wherever I move, I see him—at night he is in my dreams! I fear him, and yet an unknown power draws me toward him, and makes me——No! No! Not love him! For I fear him too much. I cannot gaze into his eye without a shudder!"

The old warrior did not reply. His eyes were fixed on the fire, the



pipe was extended in his left hand, but he sat motionless as a stone. In her agitation Madeline had not so much addressed the Chief, as involuntarily shaped her thoughts in words. Wondering at the continued silence of Yoconok, she laid her hand lightly upon his arm—it was cold as ice.

With a shudder she looked into his face—the eyes were glassy.

“Yoconok! Speak to your child! Do not leave me alone, in the cold, dark world!”

He spoke not, but a faint light, like the last ray of the expiring taper, glanced from his motionless eyeballs. She flung herself upon him, girded his gaunt form in her bared arms, and pressed her downy cheek against his withered face. Cold the form, cold the cheek, cold as the ice upon the Wissahikon.

“He is dead!” The wild shriek of Madeline rung through the woods—“Mine only friend! The blood of the dying deer only called him back to life for a moment—he is dead, gone to the land where his fathers dwell, and without one parting word to his child!”

She was an orphan, one of those wandering children of God, whom no one calls, Child! Alone in the world! Those words are full of meaning, but to the orphan they speak in tones of horrible emphasis. To the orphan they mean poverty and neglect, temptation and despair.

But she was not yet altogether alone. A few muttered words quivered from the cold lips of the dying Indian. With the last gleam of life playing over his motionless balls, he spoke—

“Fear this STRANGER! as the MANITTO OF EVIL fear him! Do not put your trust in Gilbert. He is brave, he is true, *but hands that he cannot see*, guide him on to a deed of falsehood and blood. Fear the stranger—do not trust Gilbert—but *dread the old man, whose roof gives you shelter*, dread him worse than hunger—cold—or death!”

With these words,—spoken not as we have written them, but in an Indian dialect, which compresses a hundred separate ideas in a sentence,—the old Chief, who had once grasped the hand of William Penn, lay on the snow, as cold as the wind which swept his tawny cheeks, as motionless as the great trunks which encircled the scene, rising in the fire-light, like the unhewn pillars of a pagan temple.

Madeline was alone.

The same cheerful glow, which lighted up her young face, shone over the mangled deer, and revealed the cold features of the dead Indian.

The woods were very still. Now and then, a gust of wind howled, like a war-blast, down some midnight ravine, and again, every sound save the crackling of the wild-wood fire died away, in an unearthly stillness.

Her arms clasped, her beautiful profile cut distinctly on the dark background, her large lustrous eye, her warm nether lip tinted by the fire, she stood in an attitude of deep sorrow, gazing into the face of the corse.

As the old man died, he had folded his arms, and knit his brows; he looked stern and unrelenting, even as a corse; there was a warrior's defiance upon his red visage.

"He was my only friend! True, the old man at the Farm-House gave me food and shelter, since the hour when I was discovered in these woods—a poor, forsaken babe. But Yoconok was my friend; to him I brought my sorrows, of him I asked advice. While he lived, I felt that I was not *alone*! Now it is changed! This cold winter night is not more desolate than the fate of the poor Orphan Girl!"

Beside the fire she knelt, and raised her eyes, and spread forth her hands, and through the canopy of overarching pines, looked up to—God.

O, how softly, over her brown face, that expression of child-like Faith stole, like a veil of light!

A step aroused her from her prayer—a hand was laid upon her shoulder—with a half-uttered cry of fear, she sprang to her feet.

"The Wizard! The Ghost-seer!'" she cried, clasping her hands to her breast, with an accent and a gesture of shuddering fear.

"Nay, maiden, do not fear me. Old Isaac harms no one. He is but a Watcher, in this dreary world. The Lord hath told him, "Watch and I will come to thee;" and lo! Isaac watches evermore, seeking the knowledge of the Life which is Eternal! Dost fear the old man, maiden?"

In the light of the fire, stood a stunted figure, not more than five feet in height, the chest narrow, the back bent, as if with years, the veins swelling black and distinct on the pale face and dead-white hands.

That face—sunken on the breast—was marked by deep wrinkles, which traversed the cheeks and brow, and added to the spiritual look of those blue eyes, which seemed not so much to shine, as to burn, beneath the white eyebrows. From a small cap of black cloth, which covered the head of the stranger, long locks of straight hair fell like snow-flakes, and waved in white masses, in the light of the fire.

He was clad after the costume of the olden time. A dark coat, much faded and worn, with buttons of polished metal; a vest with white lapels, descending half-way to the knees; black stockings, which fell in wrinkles around the sunken limbs, and large shoes, glittering with silver buckles.

This was the costume of the old man, whose form indicated extreme old age, or premature decrepitude, while his blue eyes and white hair, gave an almost hallowed look to his wrinkled face.

And yet the maiden shrunk from that withered form, with her hands clasped on her bosom, and felt her blood grow chill, as she encountered the glance of those mild blue eyes.

"Do not fear me, maiden. I am an old man—a poor withered frame—and a brain, eaten by much toil, and the labors of long and dreary win-

ters. Passing through the woods, I witnessed the scene between you and this aged Indian : indeed I saw him gasp his last, as I was about to come to his aid.—I will secure Christian burial for his corse.”—

“Do not—do not touch him !” cried Madeline, rushing forward, as the hands of the old man were placed upon the arms of the dead Indian—“For the sake of God, do not place your hands upon him. For they say”—a shudder pervaded her form——“they say, that you”——

“What do they speak ill of me ?” asked the old man, raising his mild eyes—“Of me ! A poor old withered man, who lives apart from the great world, and cares not for its idle uproar, nor for its petty joys ?”

“They say, that you have sold yourself to the Enemy of Mankind,”—gasped Madeline, her eyes enchained, against her will, to the tranquil glance of the stranger.

“Is that all ?” and a smile stole over his wrinkled face—“Never heed such fire-side gossip, my good girl. Now mark me—I will take the dead body of your friend—will have it conveyed to my house on the other side of the Wissahikon, near the Schuylkill—and bury it, with all the rites of Christian burial.—Does that look like the act of one who is sold to the Devil ?”

“But let Yoconok rest among his woods and trees. What need of a cold graveyard for him ? Let him be buried among his pines, where the Song of the Wissahikon will cheer his slumber, and a granite rock will pillow his head.”—

The Maiden, in her earnestness, advanced and laid her hand upon the “Wizard’s” shoulder.

“Yoconok shall go with me !” he calmly said. “He has no friends ; I will be his friend, after he is dead. Hah ! What is this I see ?”

With a sudden gesture he seized the white hand, which rested on his shoulder, and—his blue eyes dilating until they seemed fired with madness—turned the palm towards the fire :

“No Bridal ring shall ever cross this hand ! No child shall ever bless your sight ! I read it, in the lustre of your eye, which is lighted with the fire of a changeless Destiny ! Alas ! Alas ! I pity and I rejoice ! Dishonor and a Sudden Death will soon be yours !”

“It is false !” gasped Madeline, her cheek pale as marble—“In the name of God, who loves us all, I defy your Master, who only hates and cannot love !”

She covered her face, and stood with her head bowed, near the fire. The old man gazed upon her trembling form with a look of overwhelming compassion, which was soon displaced by an expression of singular triumph. There was an unnatural joy in his parting lips, his eyes sparkling with light, his face flushed with crimson.

Not a word was spoken ; a silence, unbroken by a whisper, deepened the interest of the scene.



"Pity me!" cried Madeline, as she raised her eyes—"Do not doom me to an early death, and of all deaths,—ah! I dare not speak it!"

Isaac did not answer; still the mingled expression of triumph and pity agitated his aged features.

"Come hither, Black David," said Isaac the Wizard, turning toward the darker recesses of the covert—"Take this body and bear it to my house. Dost hear?"

From the shadows advanced a form, which Madeline—already appalled by the words of the old man—beheld with indescribable fear.

It was a miserable wreck of humanity, not more than four feet in height, with the crooked limbs trembling beneath the huge body, the back rising in a shapeless hump, and the long, unnatural, we had almost said, *horse-like* face, resting on the breast, and hidden beneath a shaggy mass of straight black hair.

"Y-e-e-s, Master! I'se here! What wouldst do with 'un?"

From that mass of hair, two large eyes shot a strange unnatural gleam, as the fire, rising in a sudden flame, tinted with strong light, the grotesque points of this deformed figure.

He was clad in a coarse garb, a kind of mantle, wrapping the deep chest and the protuberant hump, with the arms appearing from its folds, covered with loose sleeves of dark cloth. His straight black hair, falling in tangled masses, formed the only covering for his head.

Strange to say, the hands were small, white and delicate, presenting a strong contrast to the chaotic physical vigor of the deformed man.

"Take the body of Yoconok—dost hear me? I would give him Christian burial. Bear it to my mansion. I will reward you. Go!"

Madeline for a moment seemed deprived of all power of motion or speech. All the wild legends which she had heard, concerning the old man, Isaac the Wizard, and his Familiar Spirit, Black David, crowded on her brain; she felt a creeping awe pervade her veins and pale her cheek.

In this pale-faced old man, she beheld a Servant of the Evil one; in the poor wretch, whose physical deformity was at once hideous and pitiable, she saw an Incarnate Demon.

Such was the Superstition of the olden time, when every old woman, not remarkable for personal beauty, was burned as a Witch, and old men, not regular in attendance at Meeting, and somewhat given to burning candles late at night, were choked to death, as Wizards.—

"Do not touch him! He was my friend!"

Madeline started forward, and laid her hand upon the arm of the wizard. A faint smile was visible on the old man's face; he regarded for a moment her countenance, glowing with an intensity of fear, and then taking her arm gently within his own, led her from the fire.

"Come," he said, "the wood is dark, the way lonely. I will wait upon you to the farm-house door. Come—never fear me! They tell

sad stories of my life, I hear—and, ha, ha ! poor Black David here, is linked with me, in an infernal compact ! Come—there is more wizard craft in those black eyes of thine, than in all my lore.—Remember, David !”

He led the trembling girl—who looked up into his face with something of reverence for his age, more of fear for his supernatural character, manifested in her gaze—he led her into the shadows of the covert, and the light streamed over the mangled deer, the dead chieftain, and the deformed man.

Through the meshes of his tangled hair, he gazed after the old man and the maiden, and then, like a beast on its haunches, crouched beside the fire, his white hands supporting his cheeks, while his elbows rested on his knees.

The hair was swept aside from his face, and his features appeared distinctly, in the ruddy fire-light.

It must be confessed that the face was hideous, and its unnatural length, the manner in which it seemed to rest directly on the chest, made the resemblance which it bore to the head of a horse, more palpable and repulsive.

The brow was heavy ; the nose long and thin, the mouth small, the chin round and full ; the eyes deep-set and full of intense light. Such was the general character of that face, with the hair falling in thick straight masses on either side ; but the sudden glow of the fire made the cheek-bones seem unnaturally prominent, the hollow beneath more deep and cavernous, and gave the brow a bolder outline, the lips a more decided scorn, the eyes a wilder light.

He crouched by the fire, his distorted form darkly defined against the snow-mantled earth. The pine-branches above bent slowly to the winter blast, and the massy trees around, glowed from black into crimson.

Spreading forth his hands, which looked as white and delicate as the marble hands of a sculptured Venus, he seemed absorbed in his own wandering thoughts.

He spoke ; the echo of his voice broke the deep silence, with a startling emphasis, and yet that voice was soft, thrilling and musical, as the tones of a beautiful woman.

“ Three hundred years—it is a wilderness of strange memories !” thus he murmured, without the slightest indication of ignorance or vulgarity in his manner or his language—“ In truth, it is a long while to—look back ! There was the bluff Harry, renowned for the number of his wives, and the establishment of the *Reformation*. Pale-faced Edward, too young to be criminal ; Lady Grey, who passed from the throne to the block ; Mary called Bloody, and Elizabeth called Virgin ; James the Pedant ; Charles the Martyr and Charles the Libertine—all are gone long ago. Dust and ashes, despite their fine linen and royal blood. Yet I see them all again, see them as plainly as when—’Tut ! Tut !”

He glanced around the covert, with his deep-set eyes kindling in a more vivid light :

"They may hear me—call me Madman—ho ! ho ! Then to the prison or the scaffold with the old dotard ! Three hundred years ! A great while to live, but wearisome, very, very wearisome ! To see one century whirling along, bubbling and frothing just like the others, and only bubbling and frothing with a more pitiful uproar as it goes down in the great abyss, called Time Past, which has swallowed up the Dead Ages ! I am weary of it all, and"—

The body of the Indian Chief, resting stiff and motionless in the warmth of the fire, met his gaze.

"He sleeps well ! But as for me"—

And as he bent his face nearer to the fire, and clasped his white hands, as in a gesture of supplication, it might be seen that there were tears in the eyes of the Deformed Maniac.

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## CHAPTER THIRD.

### THE FARM-HOUSE.

"Come, folks, help yourselves ! It's the last night of the Old Year, and we'll send the dull old fellow to his grave, with a hearty store of good things under his belt, and a bowl of good liquor to make him sleep easy ! Some of the turkey, Parson ? Hey ! How are you comin' on down there, at 'tother end of the table ? Try a slice of this ham, neighbor Spurtzelditscher ?—a-h ! There's fat and lean ! By Thun-der ! You see, neighbor, I swear in English ! I sometimes wish I could swear in Dutch. There's something that stirs the heart, in a solid, deep-chested Dutch oath ! Now then, who's for the cider ?—a-h, that's the stuff ! hisses and froths like an old maid, who has been caught lying about her neighbors—the rale October juice of the red-streaked Spitzenberger, as I'm an honest man !"

The old man, at the head of the table, raised the hot poker with one hand, while the other rested upon the edge of the broad bowl, which was filled to the brim with the steaming cider. It was a curious-looking bowl, fashioned of some strange wood, hard as iron, with an uncouth name, and crowded all around its capacious sides with carvings of the most grotesque character.



He was an old man, but you must not picture to yourself a spare form, or lantern jaws, or eyes bleared and glassy.

Beneath the ample folds of his brown waistcoat, a rotundity that would have made the fortunes of a dozen Aldermen, was hidden; his hair, eyebrows and long beard, were all white as snow, yet his round cheeks glowed with tints as warm and rosy, as those which make an unbroiled sirloin steak look lovely in the eyes of a good liver. The eyebrows were white, as though the snow had fallen on his forehead, and hung there for a moment, ere it melted before the summer of his cheeks. And yet, from beneath those shaggy outlines, two eyes, very small, very black, and piercing as daggers' points, glittered like newly lighted coals. Altogether it was a face that would have warmed a hungry man, with its plump outline, and unctuous look, to say nothing of the nose, which shone like a huge red pear, ripening in the autumnal sun.

As to the form of the old man, it would have scared a famine into nothingness, by its very picture of eloquent fatness. His broad shoulders, his sinewy arms, his chest that shook with laughter, deep and sonorous, beneath the lace ruffles of his shirt, his hands round and plump, glowing to the very finger tips with corpulence,—ah, he was a hale old fellow, who seemed to grow younger with time, and catch new bloom on his cheeks, from the very icicles of age.

He was seated in his great arm-chair, at the head of the table, which extended along the sanded floor, from the fire-place to the doorway. In one hand he raised the poker, with its blazing point; in the other he grasped the corpulent bowl, frothing to the brim with fragrant cider.

"Your health, my good folks! A-a-h!" with a sigh of deep satisfaction—"That's the stuff to warm the heart and set the brain a-fire! And, while I think o't, here's a health to his Majesty, King George!"

As he set down the bowl, he slightly inclined his head to one side, and smoothing down his white beard, with his plump fingers, he glanced with one eye half-closed, along the well-filled board.

It was an interesting scene. In the foreground, a huge turkey, brown and smoking; the view was lengthened out with a savory panorama of boiled ham, chickens and venison, interspersed with white pyramids of home-made bread, and bowls of steaming cider. This long table, groaning under the weight of substantial cheer, was framed by the faces of some twenty-five or thirty guests. Here the parson, with his red face glowing between his black cap and blacker gown: there the portly farmer, with bony hands and iron frame; yonder a group of rosy-cheeked country girls, and beyond them, a Philadelphia lawyer, lank as a bean-pole and devouring as a Famine. The clatter of knives and forks deafened the ears, and was only interrupted by a chorus, something like this:

"A little more of the ham!" cried the Parson; "red lean and white fat—very—"

"Some of the chicken, Dolly?" exclaimed a gallant country beau—"legs or breast?"

"Cider? Your health, neighbor! Royal stuff, that!" was the remark of a city merchant, whose broadcloth shone beside the country home-spun—"Did you say, you would like a piece of this chicken?"

"The salt, if you please. A little ham. There. Some turkey: A touch of that rabbit. Thank you for the corn-beef. Pass the venison. Cider—yes, sir, cider. Health, sir. Little more ham! Pass the pepper. Some more turkey—no! Just a *hint* of that 'possum."

This was the Philadelphia lawyer, whose knife and fork seemed impelled by a mechanical power of unknown capacities, while his plate went round the orbit of the table like a planet, somewhat hasty and irregular in its motions. His lank jaws were never still. He seemed to have been placed upon this earth, only to solve a great problem, to wit, how much can a man devour whose body resembles a lath or a bean-pole, and how long will it require for him to eat himself into an apoplexy?

"Dat rabbit ish nish! Mein Gott! Neighbor Perkenpine!" was the remark of Neighbor Spurtzelditscher, a short, thick, brown-faced farmer, in linsey-wolsey, who was commonly called "Spurtz" for the sake of brevity and an easy life.

Two farmers sat beside each other, engaged in earnest conversation, which it must be confessed was carried on with perseverance and ingenuity, worthy of a wider field. You may see them, near the lower end of the table, both very old men, alike thin, withered and greyhaired, and attired in linsey-wolsey. The one this way, cannot speak a syllable of any language but English, and his friend understands never a word, that is not spoken in German. But still, with all these obstacles, which to the vulgar mind might appear insurmountable, they maintain a very intelligible, nay, interesting conversation.

Neighbor Wampole, the farmer who speaks English and English only, poises the white breast of a chicken on his fork, gazes intently in his neighbor's face, and utters distinctly his condensed opinion——

"*Good!*" he cries, and the chicken disappears.

To this emphatic remark, neighbor Schneider, who cannot speak a word, that is not German, replies by elevating a savory slice of the opossum, and displaying it for a moment before his neighbor's eyes; after which he significantly remarks——

"*Goot!*" and the opossum vanishes.

The bowls are touched; one drinks to the other's health; again that significant glance, and again that interesting interchange of thought——

"*Good!*"

"*Goot!*"

Near these intelligent and communicative neighbours, and opposite the parson, was seen a gentleman of some forty years, remarkable for his



immense wig, with flowing flaxen curls, his velvet coat, silver shoe-buckles, and prominent nose, curved like a parrot's beak. 'This was the Doctor of the country-side, famous for the potency of his "hum—ha!" which was supposed to comprise a whole encyclopædia of medical knowledge, and for the peculiarly dexterous application of his gold-headed cane to the side of his nose.

He never had much to say, and on the present occasion, merely interrupted the important duty of supper, with such remarks as—"Soberly and in verity, this stewed rabbit is a tooth-some dish!"

For his almost unbroken silence, he seemed to continually apologize by drinking deep draughts of the steaming cider. Indeed, a superficial observer of human nature would have supposed, at first sight, that the Doctor was in liquor, or that the liquor was in the Doctor; for his head went bobbing from side to side like a cork on a wave, and he brushed imaginary flies from the tip of his nose, with great energy and perseverance.

And while the supper-party went gayly on by the light of the home-made candles, which were placed along the board, there was a fire of huge logs, blazing and crackling within the broad arch of the spacious hearth.

The light of that roaring fire fell in crimson flashes over the faces of the guests, and lighted up with its hearty glow every nook and corner of the farm-house hall.

Would you like to look upon that Picture of Comfort in the Olden Time?

Then strip your imagination of all modern ideas, and prepare for a picture of 1774, as widely contrasted with 1847, as a hale old Revolutionary soldier, with his rosy cheeks and snow-white hair, compares with a Chesnut Street dandy, remarkable only for his slim waist and sublimely insipid face.

Do not expect to behold any thing like imported carpet on the floor. No carpets from Brussels or from Smyrna conceal the sanded boards, nor are the walls covered with hangings of French paper. There are no chairs with narrow seats and dangerous backs, looking like chairs that never were healthy, but stricken with consumption from the moment of their birth. Nor is there any diminutive stove, glaring with the pestilence of anthracite; nor do you behold tables with marble tops, or mantel-pieces, unworthy of the name, adorned with showy lamps, or windows with Venitian blinds, and sills as narrow as a bigot's soul.

Look around this farm-house hall and see what comfort was like, in the olden time.

The light of the great hearth-fire sparkles upon the sanded floor, and glows along those huge rafters which support the ceiling. The walls are white as snow, and the window-frames deep-sunken and capacious.



In one corner stands the cupboard, painted blue, and glittering with a store of burnished pewter; opposite you discern the old clock, with its round Dutch face, and its new moon rising over a broken cloud.

But the hearth is decidedly the centre of the picture. It looks like a great sacrificial fire built beneath some pagan archway. Above the arch hangs a rifle, resting on the antlers of the wild deer, and within the recess on either side of the fire, benches of substantial oak are placed.

A blind negro sits on the bench to the right, his fingers outspread toward the flame, which imparts its red glow to his ebony features, and reveals the fiddle laid with its bow across his knees.

Opposite is seated a corpulent old dame, whose black face is contrasted with a flaming red handkerchief wound about the temples, while her withered hands are crossed upon her linsey dress.

"I say, Phillisey, dis am comfor'bl'!"

"It ar, Sam, you blind *niggar*!"

Near the hearth, seated on huge arm-chairs, behold three white dames, whose rotund forms and full-moon faces, do not indicate any deprivation of the comforts of life. Their heads bent together, their white caps touching each other, they pass the snuff-box, and converse in earnest whispers.

"It is a strange world, Betsy!"

"And, Nancy, we've all got to die—*sometime*!"

"But, Sally, it was not so when I was a girl!"

You will at once perceive, that their conversation is of the most interesting character. The snuff-box passes, and the thoughts of the old ladies take a different turn.

"Queer world! Laws-a-massy, Betz!"

"We must all go! 'Dust to dust,' as the Parson sez!"

"When I was a girl——"

But at this moment of absorbing interest the conversation is interrupted by the bluff, hearty tones of the host:

"I say, Parson, did you ever hear the story of Old Hontz and his New Year's supper?"

By way of commanding attention, he brought the handle of his knife upon the table, with all the force of his right arm.

"Never did!" responded the Parson, from the other end of the table, as he raised a dainty piece of rabbit to his lips.

"Nor you, Lawyer Simmons? Nor you, Doctor Perkenpine? Hello! Did *none* of you ever hear the story of Old Hontz, and his New Year's supper?"

For a moment the great work of eating and drinking was suspended. At least twenty faces were turned toward the jovial host. There was a wicked twinkle in the old fellow's half-closed eyes, and even the inclination of his head to one side looked suspicious.

"Never heard the story, friend Peter!" was the burden of twenty voices.

The old man settled himself easily in his huge chair, smoothed his white beard with his fat fingers, and took a hearty draught of cider. Then, taking a pipe from a side pocket, he quietly filled the bowl with tobacco, lighted it at the candle, and resting comfortably in his chair, seemed at peace with all the world, as the smoke floated in wreaths around his red face.

"As you're all done supper, I'd like to tell you the story. It's a short story, but very, very good; especially to those, who have eaten heartily of stewed rabbit. Talkin' o' rabbit, how d'ye like it, Parson?"

"I have feasted plentifully upon this dish, friend Peter," replied the Parson.

"It is savory—very toothsome," echoed the Doctor.

"Could not be better! where did you get the rabbits?" inquired the lawyer.

"*That's* the fun of it, Lawyer Simmons. Where did I get the rabbits? *That's* the very cream of the joke. Now mark me, everybody here, when I've told my story, they will be sorry that they did not try the stewed rabbit. For, as you will see, this story is apt to give one a ravenous taste for stewed rabbit——"

"But concerning this unknown person whom you call Old Hontz?" suggested the Parson.

"I want you all to be very still, while I tell this story. G-a-ls! (turning to the three corpulent dames,) stop babbling and listen!" The guests were all attention; you might have heard a pin drop. "Once upon a time, there lived a jolly old fellow named Hontz, who had a house in a woods, and was well-to-do in the world; his neighbors almost died of spite, when they looked at his barn, or saw his sleek cattle. He was rich, was old Hontz, and fond of fun, and of a glass! But he was a *bachelor*. Therefore every gossip in the neighborhood lied about him—lied murderously, telling strange stories of Old Hontz, the rare jovial fellow. They said he gained his money—not from his farm, or his horses, or his oxen, or his cows—but in unheard-of-ways, horrible to think of, and most dreadful to tell. Now, among those neighbors, there were three persons, who fed at the old fellow's table, and drank of his cider, and yet lied more horribly about him, than all the world together——"

The jovial Peter paused, and smoothed his beard, emitting a volume of smoke, as he glanced over the faces of the wondering guests. Even the three aged dames by the fire bent forward, in attitudes of absorbing interest, and the old Negro in the chimney corner remarked, in an undertone, to Phillisey—"Berry bad neighbors, dem!"

"Now one of these persons was a lawyer——"

"Su-r-e !" exclaimed lawyer Simmons, dropping his cider bowl.

"One a doctor——"

"Remarkable !" and the Doctor, in his surprise, permitted a savory slice of rabbit to fall from his fingers.

"And the other was a parson !"

"A parson ? Eh ! Neighbor Peter ?" cried the Parson, rubbing his nose, and fixing the black cap more firmly on his head.

"Yes—by —— ! The lawyer, the doctor and the parson, who fed at the old fellow's table, and drank of his cider, never spoke of him, save with a shrug of the shoulders, or a wink of the eye, and it may be, some such kind remark as this—'A very clever old fellow, who lives in the woods alone, *but*'—here was the sore point—'Where does he get *all* his money ?'"

It was a very interesting thing, to remark the twinkle of neighbor Peter's half-closed eye, as he paused again in his story.

A singular silence had fallen on the supper guests ; they gazed in each other's faces, and then cast their eyes down upon their folded hands.

"Now, do you want to know how this jolly old fellow (with a *white beard* and a *gréat round paunch*, mark ye) revenged himself ? He knew the doctor, the lawyer, the parson, to be very fond of good eating, but of all kinds of eating, *stewed rabbit*, and of all kinds of *stewed rabbit*——"

The story began to be very interesting. Why it was we cannot tell, but certainly the greater portion of the guests began to cast stealthy glances at the doctor, the lawyer and the parson, who sat among them, at the supper-board.

"Yes—you were saying——" hesitated the Parson. The Doctor arranged his flowing wig, with a somewhat nervous movement, and the lank face of the lawyer was lengthened out, by an expression of apathetic wonder, most ludicrous to behold.

"And of all kinds of stewed rabbit, they most admired that kind of stewed rabbit, which is smothered in onions——"

The jovial host took a hearty puff at his pipe, and placed the cider to his lips, coolly remarking—

"There's my story. What d'ye think o't, anyhow ?"

It was wonderful to behold the amazement pictured on the faces of the guests. A dead silence prevailed.

"What d'ye think of it, I say ?" and the bluff Peter rapped the table with the handle of his knife.

"Dat is no shtory at all !" faintly remarked neighbor Spurtzelditscher.

"I confess, I do not see its point——" the lawyer exclaimed.

"Nor its wit——" added the parson.

"In soberness, and in truth, I can't see *what* you are driving at !" The doctor turned his parrot nose, and looked his host full in the face.

"Why, how stupid you are ! Don't you see that the jolly old fellow



with a beard like a snow-drift, and a paunch round as a punkin, made a great supper, one New Year's Eve, and invited the doctor, the parson, the lawyer, to come and eat stewed rabbit, smothered in onions?"

The Parson blushed to the tips of his ears, while the Doctor looked in his plate, and the lawyer described lines on the table with his fork.

"Dat ish better!" cried Spurtzelditscher—"Yah! y-a-h! Dat ish goot!"

"Indeed, Mr. Peter Dorfner," exclaimed the Parson with marked politeness—"I must confess that I don't see the point of your story."

"Nor I! Nor I!" chorussed the Doctor and the Lawyer.

A faint smile began to steal over the faces of the other guests.

"But you will presently. I know you love a good story, Parson, and I'm sure, the lawyer and doctor don't love any thing better, except good living or fat fees. Soh, my hearties, I will tell you the point of the joke—while the doctor, and the lawyer, and the parson were eatin' away like so many buzzards, and a thinkin' that they were eatin' stewed rabbit smothered in onions, the old fellow, that jolly dog of a bachelor, was laughin' in his sleeve, for—for—"

"Y-e-s"—gasped the Parson, bending forward.

"For"—the old host, even Peter Dorfner, bent forward also, his little black eyes twinkling with a sort of demoniac glee—"For well he knew that these three jovial fellows were eatin'—eatin'—"

"E-a-ting—" echoed the Doctor, looking over his spectacles. The old fellow sank back in his chair, and resumed his pipe, saying mildly between the puffs of smoke—

"*Cats*. They were eatin' *cats*! Fine old Toms, which the old bachelor had caught in his farm-yard, killed and cooked—all done by himself—cats, smothered in onions! Fine dish, gentlemen—for *them* as *likes it*."

A roar like thunder shook the room. It was the sound of some twenty boisterous laughs, joined in one. For a moment nothing was seen but mouths wide open, and eyes rolling tears.

With one movement the Doctor, the Parson and the Lawyer started to their feet.

"Cats!" shrieked the Parson, pitching forward with a sea-sick movement—"Did you say cats?"

The Doctor uttered a horrible oath.

"Feed *me*—a member of the Faculty—*ME!* on *CATS!*" He shook his clenched fist over the table. "You shall pay for this! You shall"—

The Lawyer looked around with a very sickly attempt at a smile. "Neighbor Wampole, will you allow me to pass you? It seems to me that I want a little fresh air."

"Why, gentle-men! what *is* the matter?" cried the corpulent Peter

Dorfner from his good arm-chair at the head of the table—"The incident does not allude to you. Pooh! You never abused me, you"—

But a fresh explosion of laughter drowned his words. It cannot be denied that the scene was in the highest degree picturesque. There foamed the Doctor, tearing his flaxen wig, in very despite, while on the opposite side of the table, the Parson still continued to ask, whether Peter Dorfner had said cats? In the background, Lawyer Simmons' lank face was visible, pale as death, and distorted by convulsive twitchings.

And around the table were the guests, convulsed with the grotesque picture, all echoing the laugh, until the rafters shook again. Near the fire the three aged dames sat motionless, gasping for breath, the tears rolling down their round fat cheeks.

Within the chimney the Phillisey with the red handkerchief round her brow, displayed her teeth—or at least, all that time had spared her—while blind Sam, seated in the opposite corner, seized his fiddle, and played several tunes, through each other, and all together, as if for life.

And in the midst of the uproar, calm and smiling sat Peter Dorfner, in his arm-chair, at the head of the table, the pipe between his lips, and volumes of pale blue smoke wreathing around his red cheeks, and snow-white hair.

"Was de rabbit fery nish, Tector?"

"I thought you ate *ray*-ther hearty, Parson!"

"O! Lord! a doctor, a parson and a lawyer sittin' down to stewed cats!"

"An' sich an appeytite, too!"

While these, and various kindred exclamations, echoed round the room, the Doctor quietly left his seat and approached the head of the table. There was a wicked light in his pale blue eyes; a sort of determined malice in the very compression of his large sensual lips.

Peter Dorfner received him with a calm smile, smoothing down his white beard with the palm of his hand.

"This is very w-ell!" he whispered, bending down, until the curls of his wig nearly touched the cheek of Peter: "A fine joke, sir, ve-r-y fine! But shall I tell these good folks a finer one? Shall I tell them of the twenty-third of November, in the year 1756?"

Swelling with rage, he shook his cane in the old farmer's face.

"If *you dare*," Peter remarked in a whisper, as a change passed over his face, as sudden as it was startling. He grew pale; his dark eyes flashed from beneath the sleepy lids. His right hand was clenched as if by an involuntary spasm.

At this moment, the roar of laughter, which echoed round the place, was succeeded by a cry of surprise.

"Madeline! Gilbert!" resounded from every lip.

The Doctor leaned his head over his shoulder, and saw the persons, who that moment had entered the room.

"*Do you remember her Mother?*" he whispered the words into the farmer's ear.

"*Dare you violate the Oath?*" was the response uttered by the old man, through his clenched teeth, with that wicked light flashing in his eyes.

And while this singular conversation was held by the Doctor and the farmer, the guests, starting from their seats, welcomed the new-comers with many a hearty though rude salutation.

They stood in the centre of the circle, the Hunter and the Maiden, their faces glowing in the light of the hearthside flame.

She, clad in her peasant garb, which could not altogether conceal the flowing outlines of her form, nor turn your gaze away, from the sad, tender beauty of her face. Her dark hair, swept plainly aside, relieved those firm and winning features, and gave a deeper warmth to the glow of her brown cheeks, the voluptuous redness of her lips.

By her side the Hunter stood, his brawny chest and gaunt, sinewy arms, presenting a strong contrast to her maidenly form.

Almost a giant in stature, he was clad in a hunting-frock, dark blue in color, and edged with white fur. In one hand he grasped the Maiden's hand, in the other his well-tried rifle, with its dark tube, and mahogany stock, relieved by ornaments of polished silver. He wore the leggings and moccasins of an Indian; his broad chest was crossed by a buckskin belt; on one side of his waist you beheld a hunting-knife, on the other a powder-horn.

But it was not on his attire, but his face, that you fixed your gaze.

A broad, square forehead, a straight, firm nose, slightly inclining to the aquiline, a mouth somewhat too wide, and a bold, rugged chin, half-concealed by a brown beard. Such was the Hunter's face. His complexion had once been fair and sanguine, but now it was bronzed by exposure to the wind and sun, the toil of the chase, and—perchance—the fever of the battle.

Around this boldly featured face, which indicated, at first sight, a bluff, honest nature, his chesnut hair gathered in short, luxuriant curls.

"Come, Parson; 'cordin' to promise I'm here. So are you. So is Mad'lin'. We want you to say a few words from a book, so that we can go an' live together as man an' wife."

He rested one arm upon his rifle, and with Madeline's hand clasped in his own, confronted the New Year's guests.

"Yes—yes—I'll be there, in a moment," cried the Minister from the opposite side of the table. "Cats!" he added in an undertone—"A-u-g-h! So you want to be married, Gilbert—eh?"

With the book in his hand, he stood before the Hunter and his promised Wife, now fixing his eye upon the almost gigantic form, now resting his glance upon the Maiden, whose soft brown cheek began to



glow into crimson, while her white teeth were seen, through the parting lips.

Her eyes were downcast ; the black fringes rested on her cheek. Altogether, she presented an appearance, at once so virginal and so beautiful, in her humble attire, that every eye was enchained with the sight.

“Ho, ho ! So you’re goin’ to be married, Madeline !” laughed the jovial Peter Dorfner, as, leaving his chair, he advanced with a step that showed at once, that he had not lost any vigor of nerve, or physical power, in his increasing corpulence. “Goin’ to leave the old Bachelor alone ? Well—well—my blessing go with you, at any rate !”

He stood behind the Parson, a pleasant smile agitating his round cheeks, and twinkling under his half-shut lids.

But the maiden did not raise her eyes, or answer him with a word. She trembled ; yes, they could see her bosom heave from beneath the kerchief which bound it, and from her downcast lids a single tear sparkled into light.

Did she remember the warning words of old Yoconok ? “Yes, Uncle Peter”—she called him Uncle, for he had been her only protector, from the hour of childhood—“I am—I am.”—

Her nether lip was agitated with a tremulous motion ; her bosom rose with one tumultuous throb. She stood silent and trembling, her downcast eyes filled with tears.

The rude Hunter by her side, wound his iron arm about her waist :

“Mad’lin’, do not fear,” he whispered. “Don’t I love you, gal ? I know I’m but a rude fellow, but Gilbert Morgan will never see harm come to you, while God leaves him one breath in his big body ! There now, look up, and let the Parson say his words—”

These words look rude, but the dark hazel eye of the woodsman lighted up with a fiery eloquence, as he spoke, and his voice—broken by a tremor—indicated strong emotion.

“Well, girl, well, I can only say, that I approve of this marriage, and hope you’ll do well, wherever you go. There—take an old bachelor’s blessing on your head, and let the Parson begin ; that’s a good girl.”

As the bluff old Peter placed his fat hands upon the glossy locks of Madeline—his face all the while overspread with smiling wrinkles—the Doctor drew near, and bending over his shoulder, whispered these words :

“How long is it since you blessed her Mother ?”

The jovial old fellow started, as though a snake had bitten him in the throat ; he grew pale, and then red again, and observed with one of his pleasant smiles :

“Oh—ho ! Doctor Perkenpine—always at your fun !”

But turning suddenly round, he darted a look into the Doctor’s face which had something beside good humor in its sudden fire.

“You’ll leave the old man, Madeline. I shall be alone with Phillisey

and Black Sam. While one scolds the 'tother will fiddle—well, well ! Get married, girl—Gilbert will make a good husband !”

Why did the Orphan Girl shrink from the pressure of his hands, and turn pale and gasp for breath as his kindly words fell on her ears ?

The Parson arranged his cap, while the guests—stout farmers, and buxom damsels—circled about the Hunter and his betrothed. The old dames suspended their tattle, Black Sam his fiddle ; even the lawyer and the doctor forgot their unutterable wrongs, in the deep interest of the scene.

“ You love Gilbert,” he kindly whispered, wishing to calm the Maiden, whose agitation was perceptible.

“ I do !” said a soft, low voice, that was scarcely audible.

Gilbert felt a soft, warm hand, return the pressure of his rude grasp, and saw that the face upraised to meet his gaze, shone with an expression of calm confidence and child-like trust.

“ You are mine, Mad’lin’,” he whispered, bending down nearer to her, and girdling her waist with his brawny arm.

“ Yours—ever !” she whispered, and then continued, in a tone inaudible to her lover—“ Yours in spite of the warning of Yoconok—yours in spite of my own heart !”

“ Hem ! Suppose we commence—” said the Pastor, making a great display by turning over the leaves of his Prayer-Book.

At this moment, the farm-house door—behind the girl and the woodsman—was suddenly opened.

She did not see the intruder, but she heard his footstep.

“ Save me, Gilbert !” she cried, turning deathly pale—“ I am falling—”

And like a flower, suddenly snapt on its stem, she sank, and lay unconscious at her lover’s feet, her eyes closed, her form as motionless as death.

Gilbert saw her sink, so pale and lifeless, at his feet, and felt the blood whirling in a torrent through his brain. He turned his head over his shoulder ; his face was flushed with crimson ; his hazel eyes discolored by injected blood——

“ O, sir, this is your work !” he cried, and ere an instant, the hunting-knife flashed in his hand.

A mingled cry of surprise and horror echoed from every lip. There, before the half-opened door, stood a young man, clad in plain grey, his handsome face wearing a pleasant smile, as he brushed the snow from his curling brown hair. Over his shoulder appeared a red, round face, with a wide mouth, distorted in a grotesque grin.

“ What mean you, Gilbert ?” cried Uncle Peter—“ It is John and his friend Jacob. Surely, your senses have left you. Put away your knife, and greet our friends with a New Year’s welcome !”

As the corpulent host spoke, he laid one hand gently on the Hunter’s arm, and greeted the strangers, with a cordial grasp.

"New Year's welcome!" growled Gilbert, as his flushed face writhed in every feature. "To whom? To men who have no name? For what? For poisoning the mind of this innocent girl—By \* \* \*! This is my welcome!"

Leaving the swooning girl extended on the floor, he fiercely turned, and confronted the young man, whom we have known by the simple name of JOHN.

"You are a purty-built fellow, and, I guess, know how to fight;"—his manner was taunting, and a mocking sneer curled his lip—"Do you see this knife?"

"I see it," answered John, with a pleasant smile upon his handsome face,—“It seems a very good blade. The hilt, I believe, is bone.”

A dead silence prevailed; every eye was centred upon the young man; the contrast between the huge hunter and the slender stranger was palpable.

For a moment they surveyed each other, while Gilbert clenched the hilt of his knife with an iron grasp——

—That moment was soon gone, but while it passed, our friend Jacopo, with the round face and enormous mouth, stole quietly behind the hunter, poured some white powder in a goblet filled with water, and applied it to the lips of the fainting girl, as he raised her from the floor. The action passed unobserved; every eye was fixed upon the hunter and his antagonist.——

A scene occurred which baffles description. Suddenly the dead silence was broken by the screams of women, the voices of men mingled in confused cries.

The young stranger was on the floor, the knee of Gilbert on his breast, the knife flashing above his face.

"Do not strike him," cried Peter Dorfner,—“Take care, Gilbert, it will be a Murder——”

"Stand back! Woe to the man who meddles in this quarrel!"—the hunter was hoarse with rage; his voice, yelling through the farm-house, sounded more like the howl of a hunted buffalo, than the voice of a human being. "I tell you, he belongs to me! He has stepped between me and Mad'lin! Stand back—Now, Mister, will you tell your name, who you are, and whar' you b'long? Quick!"

John's face was very pale. Stretched on the floor, his back against the hard boards, the knee of the hunter pressing the life out of his chest, he made a desperate effort to free himself, gathering all his strength in the attempt. It was in vain. The knee pressed heavier and firmer upon his heart; a convulsive movement agitated the muscles of his throat. As his face grew paler, his eyes began to protrude from their sockets.

"Quick! Your name, I say!"—and the uplifted knife flashed into the very eyes of the helpless man.



His lips moved ; he uttered a word. Gilbert bent down to hear it—

“*Coward!*” he exclaimed, and a scornful smile crossed his pale features. There was something so resolute, in this solitary word of the helpless man, that a murmur of admiration escaped from the spectators, who were held terrified and motionless by the interest of the scene.

“Then, take this!” The knife descended, urged by the impulse of a madman’s fury, and the prostrate man closed his eyes, as he saw the steel flash over him, ere it fell.

A sharp, piercing cry was heard ; it came from Jacopo’s lips, as, with the fainting maiden in his arms, he beheld the danger of his Master.

“Strike him at your peril!” he screamed—“it is the Lord——”

But his voice was drowned in the shout of wonder which echoed from every lip, and filled the wide hall with a sound like thunder.

The knife had been dashed aside. Turned from its aim by a fragile stick, which lay, severed in twain, on one side of the prostrate man, while the knife glittered on the other, from the sand which covered the floor.

One cry murmured from every lip, a sound which mingled wonder with fear, and was remarkable not so much for loudness, as for depth of tone :

“The Monk of Wissahikon!” These words were distinguishable amid its clamor.

Even the bluff host started back, as though seized with sudden fright ; the guests, the doctor, lawyer, parson, the buxom damsels, and the hearty farmers, all moved backward, with the same impulse.

At the sound, Gilbert the Hunter rose, and stood with his head bowed and his arms motionless by his side. He, the strong man, who, only a moment ago, had stricken his knife at the heart of a helpless man, now trembled in every iron nerve.

Jacopo alone, gazing around upon the circle of affrighted faces, could not comprehend the cause of this sudden change, this universal terror.

The young man, relieved from the pressure of the giant’s knee, and with the knife no longer flashing death into his face, rose into a sitting posture, and looked around with a blank stare, his eyes dilating in his ashen visage.

Before him stood the cause of this strange terror ; a voice marked by its musical emphasis, melted gently on his ears :

“It was wrong, Gilbert, and the good God will not love you for the guilty thought ! To raise your hand against your brother’s life—a murderer’s deed !”

Not an eye but was riveted to the face of the speaker ; and again the whisper was heard—

“*The Monk of Wissahikon!*”

In the centre of the circle described by the spectators, stood a young

man, not more than nineteen years old ; his form at once graceful and athletic, clad in a coat or tunic of black velvet, which, leaving his throat bare, fell in easy folds from his broad shoulders to his knees.

His hair, long and flowing, in hue as black as the robe which he wore, was crowned by a circular cap, also made of velvet ; and, framed by the cap and the dark hair, a face appeared which at once enchained the gaze of every eye.

It was a young face, the forehead broad and high, the eyebrows arched like a crescent, the nose straight and regular, the lips warm and full, the chin round and beardless.

Such was the general description of the face ; but there was a look upon its brown skin, an expression woven with its firm features, a light shining from its eyes, so piercing and impetuous, so much like magic or magnetism, that no words can depict the Power which it held, at once and for ever, upon the souls of those who looked upon it.

That face, in a word, linked with a form whose boyish outlines were just ripening into young manhood, seemed like the face of one set apart from the herd of mankind by some supernatural power. It bore the stamp of Destiny.

In the eastern lands it would have been said, at once, that the brown face was gifted with the terrible fatality of the Evil Eye.

Few could gaze steadily into that eye, and mark its colour ; it was either dead, with a vacant, glassy stare, or lighted up with a flame, that shot its power to the gazer's heart, and held him dumb and motionless.

Most strange it was to see the terror which that face excited in the farm-house of Wissahikon.

Not a word was spoken, as those large eyes roved from side to side, nor did a solitary voice bid the young man welcome to the New Year's festival.

He stood in the midst of the scene, his right hand looking like marble, contrasted with his dress, resting absently upon the silver cross, which, suspended from his neck, rose and fell with every pulsation of his chest.

"Your name?" cried John, as he slowly rose to his feet, and took the stranger by the hand. "You have done me a service which I shall never forget. I owe my life to you—"

He spoke hurriedly, but his face was flushed, his voice broken by sincere feeling.

"They call me Paul Ardenheim."

He uttered these words in a voice whose deep melody charmed every ear ; and then turning, sought the door by which he had entered. As he walked away with an even stride, his back toward the gazers, it might be seen that his velvet garb concealed a form of manly vigor, and almost womanly beauty.

On the threshold he paused ; once more they beheld that bronzed face with the large eyes, shining with that intense light—

"Do not war upon each other, my friends. The cloud of war is darkening over our land. It will be a long and bloody contest. If war you must, if you cannot live without the sword, let your war be waged against the invaders of our soil; let your swords be sharpened for their throats."

The door closed; he was gone; his place was vacant, yet still they seemed to behold him in his dark garb, standing in their midst, the sad look upon his face, the vivid light in his large eyes.

"Remain here, Jacob," cried John, as, with his face moved by strong emotion, he rushed to the door. "I will return in a moment!"

The door had not closed after him, when Gilbert took his knife from the floor.

He was moving to the door, when Uncle Peter laid his hand on his arm: "Which way, Gilbert?"

"What's that to you?" was the hurried reply.

"A great deal, my good friend:" the host whispered a word in his ear, and with a rapid motion described a sign on his forehead. "Now go! Harm the stranger at your peril! You know your duty! Go!"

The countenance of the hunter fell.

"You, too, Uncle Peter? You among us? Then these stories are true—"

"Sirrah! Don't you see these people are listening with open eyes and ears? Go! You remember—"

The other answered in a whisper—

"The house of old Isaac, on the hill near the Schuylkill! But Mad'lin'?"

He cast his glance toward the unconscious maiden, who still reposed in Jacob's arms, her brown hair falling neglected over her pale cheeks, while her arms hung by her side.

"Girls, you will carry Madeline to her room," said Peter, in a loud voice—"This marriage cannot take place to-night! Go! *Your duty is before you—I command you!*"

The girl started from her swoon, even as her hunter lover stood with his face turned toward the door. She dashed the flowing hair from her face as she sprang from Jacopo's arms, and looked around with a frightened glance.

"I saw it all!" she said in a whisper, that went to every heart—"I saw her led, pale and beautiful, in her white dress, which was also her shroud, into the half-lighted room, with rude wainscot on its narrow walls, and a couch in one corner.—"

"Do you hear? Take her to her room—she is out of her head!"—the face of Uncle Peter grew crimson, as he waved his hand, and with that emphatic gesture, and angry voice, bade the country damsels remove the bewildered girl.



"O, the scene was very sad, and it seemed to me, as I looked on, my eyes were filled with bitter tears. For she was a Mother, and no friend was near to watch over her agony; afar from her country and her home, and not one kind hand to wipe away a tear! Yes, there was one friend—a faithful negro, who fought for his mistress. But I see it yet—ah God! They blind him with their knives—his eyes are dark—dark forever! He cannot see the Babe, which is torn from the Mother's arms, ere it has blessed her with a smile——ah! Spare her, pity her, for she is a mother, and no friend is near!"

"Must we hear these ravings all night?" Peter Dorfner forced the bewildered girl into the arms of two red-cheeked damsels, and pointed to the door. "To her chamber, and let her sleep away this crazy dream!"

As she was borne through the door, which opened upon the stairway, Gilbert, with his head bowed down, and his right hand clasped upon his knife, while the other grasped the rifle, left the farm-house without a word.

The bluff Peter, with his red face and white beard, found himself standing alone among his wondering guests.

"Hey, folks? Why do you stare so? Is it such a wonder to see two boys pick a quarrel with each other, or do you get frightened at a love-sick girl's faintin' fit? Come—draw your *cheers* around the fire; and let the women make mischief, while the men smoke. A pipe, doctor? Come, don't be snappish—parson, forgive that little joke about the rabbits—here, lawyer Simmons, let's have a social chat, I say!"

In a moment, a circle was formed around the fire. The centre of the picture, sat the jovial Peter, his red face and round form glowing in the light. On one side the Lawyer, with a most lugubrious face; on the other the Doctor, who arranged his wig, and looked steadily into the fire. Next to the Doctor, the Parson was seen, his limbs crossed, and his hands folded pleasantly upon his stomach.

The four, every one with his pipe and his bowl of cider, smoked and drank as if for their lives. A constantly accumulating cloud hung over their heads.

Around these figures, to the right and left were displayed the three aged dames, the young girls, the stripling farmers, and the good neighbors Wampole and Spurtzelditscher. Far in the chimney, Phillisey was sleeping, nodding portentously, and every moment making a strong demonstration of throwing herself into the fire. The blind fiddler, Black Sam, also seemed drowsy; his sightless eyeballs glared in the light, and his fiddle lay neglected upon his knees.

But Jacopo—where is Jacopo, with that face shining like a beacon, that form resembling a barrel, mounted on bean-poles? Behold him yonder. Bending over the table, cramming himself with the wreck of the supper dainties, now paying his respects to the fragments of a sausage, now drowning his sorrows in a brimming bowl of rare October. All the

while, a fit of laughter seems struggling into birth, through every fibre of his grotesque face. You see it in the distortions of his enormous mouth, in the twinkling of his small black eyes.

"Poor girl! Such a vivifying powder—good for fainting spells! Better for unknown lovers!"

Broader and brighter grew the great fire on the hearth, and thicker and darker rolled the tobacco cloud over the room.

"Why d'ye all sit here, like leaden images in a Dutch church? Not a word has been spoken for this five minutes. Where's all your fun, Doctor? Parson, you sit moping like an owl; and as for you, Lawyer, one 'ud think that your rich gran'mother had just died, and cut you off *without* a shillin'! Here, Phillisey; go up into the garret; under the eaves of the roof, you will find certain bottles of rare old wine, which a Philadelphia marchant gave me some years ago. Sam, I say, S-a-m! Wake up and giv's a tune!"

Did the blind negro hear the jovial Peter? Certainly he did not raise his head, but, with his sightless eyeballs turned to the fire, remained as motionless as a rock of anthracite coal.

"Are you 'sleep, nigger?—come, I say! Giv's a tune!"

Was it a shudder that agitated the withered form of the black man? His face, marked by the characteristic features of his race, the flat nose, thick lips, and receding chin, quivered in every nerve, and the wrinkles on his low forehead were woven together, as though by a sudden and intense pain.

"Sam, I say; stir up, and play's a tune"—the cheerful Peter shook him roughly by the shoulder—"You ha'nt forgot all your music, man?"

The negro's fingers, cramped and bent by severe labor, moved with the same convulsive tremor which agitated his entire frame.—

"Dis nigga am sick, Massa. He am gettin berry old. Dese cold nights driv' all de tune out of um head."

A cloud was visible on Peter's rotund visage, and something very much like an oath came through his fat lips.

But at this moment, every ear was attracted by the sound of an opening door, and with heads turned from the fire, the New Year's guests gazed upon the new-comer.

"Hah! It's John," said Peter, with one of his deep chuckles—"Why so changed, man? Your step is heavy—bless my heart! You're pale as a corpse. Hey? John—don't you know me?"

"Who"—whispered the young man, as he leaned for support upon Peter's arm-chair—"Who is *he*?"

He wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead: the light, shooting up in a hearty glow, showed the death-like pallor of his handsome features.

"He? Of whom do you speak?"

"This Paul—how do you name him? This Monk of Wissahikon?"

At the word, a strange gloom fell upon the faces near the fire-side. Not a word was spoken in answer to the question.

Peter, with his habitual gesture, smoothed his beard, and inhaled a hearty draught from the tube of his pipe, glancing sidelong, from his half-closed eyes, toward the faces around him.

"Can none of you answer? You surely know him—certainly can give a reason for the terror which overspreads your faces, when you hear his voice, and feel his eye upon you! A knife is at my throat, and with the knee of my enemy pressing upon my chest, I feel that the hour of my death is come. When lo! a mere boy clad in black appears, dashes the knife aside, his only weapon a withered stick—and you all start with fear. Even my antagonist seems stricken with palsy. Have you no answer? Who is the Monk of Wissahikon?"

The Doctor looked cautiously toward the door, and took his pipe from his lips—

"He—that is—you ask—why, indeed—he is—the Monk of Wissahikon."

"The explanation is lucid," and a sneer quivered on the young man's lips—"I almost know as much as when I first asked the question."

"Sit down, John. Take a pipe, and draw a *cheer*. You shall watch with us the comin' of the New Year, while the girls wait upon poor Madeline in her chamber above us. There now, that's a hearty boy—smoke away, and let your cares fly with every puff! The Monk of—you want to know who he is? P'r'aps these good folks can tell us."

John slid into a chair, took the proffered bowl and pipe, while Jacopo crept to his side, his diminutive black eyes peering, with nervous intensity, into every face.

"Young man, there are some questions, which it is not profitable to ask on a New Year's Eve."—The Doctor's visage was elongated beneath his wig, into a most refreshing solemnity, reminding you of some strange creation of fabulous history, linking the prominent characteristics of the donkey and the owl. "About one-fourth of a mile from this place, on the other side of Wissahikon, stands an old house. In that house lives the Monk. His father lives there, too."

"Per-fectly satisfactory!" whispered Jacopo.

"Dish house—Gott forgives me! I never likes to pass him late at night!" was the profound remark of Neighbor Spurtzelditscher.

"Been by there often"—chorused Neighbor Wampole, starting a sly glance toward the door. "Often. Late at night and airy in the mornin'. Heerd strange sounds within that house. They say its ha-a-nted."

It was now the Parson's turn. Touching the young man on the arm, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and gave utterance to a profound ejaculation—



"Let us pray that we may be saved from selling our souls to the Enemy of Mankind!"

By way of enforcing this excellent idea, he placed the bowl to his lips, and drank in solemn silence.

"Perfectly satisfactory!" again whispered Jacopo.

"The old man, the father of the—Monk—has a daughter?" asked Lawyer Simmons, whose features manifested the sleepy period of drunkenness. "By-the-bye, Dorfner"—he whispered these words in the ear of his corpulent friend—"Certain they were n't cats?"

John sat moodily in front of the fire, his face shaded by his uplifted hand, while his form was enveloped to the throat, in his grey coat. Yet beneath that shadowing hand, his pale features were wet with cold moisture, and the trembling of the nether lip, the wavering light of the full eye, indicated some powerful emotion. Jacopo, as he stood at the back of his chair, bent over him, and placed his lips to the ear of his master—

"*The Potion!*" he whispered. "*All is right. While I play the fiddle, do you plead weariness, and retire to your room. The sound will attract the attention of the girls up stairs; they will flock to the dance. Your room is next to the chamber of Madeline!*"

All at once, a warm flush chased the pallor from the young man's face: his eye grew steady, intense in its glance; his full lips wreathed in a smile.

"Ah—Jacopo! What would the Devil do, were there no such imps as you, in this beautiful world?"

The minute hand of the Old Clock in the corner, pointed to the hour of Twelve. In a moment, 1774 would be buried with the dead years, and 1775, a newly born baby of a year, come chirping into light.

This was the scene which the Old Clock saw, in the last moment of the dying year.

Beside the table, huge and portly, his coat thrown aside, and his shirt sleeves rolled up, stood the jocund Peter Dorfner, his face like the full moon on the clock, as, with extended hands, he poured bottle after bottle into the colossal punch-bowl, made of some unknown wood, rimmed with silver, and carved all over with drunken satyrs and reeling fauns.

Madeira and Sherry, Brandy and Hock, he poured them all into the great bowl, and added spices without number, until the steam of the hot liquors filled the very air with a drunken flavor.

—Well is it for the toppers of 1848, that the great Secret of the Peter Dorfner Punch is lost forever, in the abyss of Time! Oh, my amiable friends, whose noses bloom with carbuncles, whose very cheeks bear the red blossoms of Brandy, had you seen old Peter mix his Punch, composed of all the liquors in the world, and fragrant with the spices of every clime, you would have grown merrily drunk with the very flavor,

may, went reeling to your beds, with a single whiff from that steaming bowl! But the secret is lost, and the toppers of 1848 must be content to drink Pure Poison; such delectable liquids as vitriol, creosote, spiced with *cocculus indicus* and freshened with putrid water, and go reeling to their graves, without the knowledge of the great Dorfner Punch.--

And while Peter mixes his great Punch, yonder, in the arm-chair, crouches Jacopo, writhing in the agonies of the fiddle, which he clasps with one hand, while the other plies the bow, and sends the dancers whirling over the sanded floor.

Only steal one look at his face, the mouth distorted by a thousand changing grimaces, the sharp black eyes, leering from the wrinkled lids, the round cheek resting lovingly against the fiddle!

Then his spider legs are crossed, while the round paunch undulates with laughter, and the long right arm seems impelled into activity by some galvanic battery.

The dancers—it were worth your while to look at them. Now huddled in a crowd, now scattered over the floor, heels and heads and arms, moving like clock-work run mad—saw you ever such dancing?

Here the Doctor without a wig, there the Parson holding up his gown, yonder Spurtzelditscher without his coat, and Perkenpine, his sallow face burning with an incipient apoplexy, round and round they whirled, entangled in a maze of young damsels, with the three old ladies skirmishing on the frontiers of that drunken circle!

Jacopo's fiddle did it all.

How it screamed, and roared, and yelled and laughed, putting gunpowder in every heel, and firing it off in every vein. It was a wicked fiddle, and Jacopo cheered it on, with curses and shouts, until the whole mansion shook, the very windows rattling like a thunder-storm of broken glass.

And round and round, and up the sanded floor, and down again, and over against the clock and across upon the table, caps flying, skirts tossing, and faces steaming with damp crimson, they kept it up, while jocund Peter mixed the punch, and Jacopo lashed the fiddle. Lashed it with the bow, as with a whip, until it seemed to beg for mercy, and roar with agony!

And as the dance went on, in drunken frenzy, the clock struck TWELVE.

“Come, boys and gals,” shouted the jovial Peter, smoothing his white beard, and looking like a wood-cut of Christmas in some old Dutch Almanac—“We danced the Old Year out—let's drink the New Year in!”

The clock struck Twelve, and in the room above—only separated from the scene of drunken mirth, by a layer of planks, and a few stout rafters—a Maiden was extended on her virgin bed, the light held in the

hand of the Libertine playing softly over that cheek, so brown and yet so warm, along the bosom, stealing in glimpses from the robe, that trembled with the life throbbing beneath its folds.

Poor Madeline !

Of all the hours in her young life, the hour of Twelve, when the bell struck 1775 into being, was most dangerous to her soul.

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## CHAPTER FOURTH.

### PAUL THE DREAMER.

THERE is a grey old rock, rising above the brown dust of the road, its granite breast turned to the west, while all around it bloom the summer leaves, and above it, the slanted pine flings its thick shadows.

It stands alone, huge, massive and colossal, like the altár of some forgotten religion, rising in sullen grandeur from the roadside earth, with many a tender flower peeping from its crevices, while its summit spreads beneath the sky, level as a floor.

You may stand upon this rock in the summer morning, and feel your heart praise God, as, encircled by the freshness of the woods, lulled by the music of the waters, you turn your gaze to the sky, whose tranquil azure—just touched by the rising sun—contrasts so beautifully with the bright green of the leaves, the soft darkness of the waves.

To the west—suddenly turning from its northern course—the Wissahikon flashes on, shadowed by broken rocks, with great walls of verdure towering on either side, into the clear morning sky.

On the south, at the distance of but one hundred yards, an ancient mill looks forth with its black walls, from the leaves that hang around its roof, and near the mill, a waterfall glimpses into light, for an instant, ere it plunges into the shadows. Beside this mill three roads meet ; one comes from the south, peeping abruptly from the world of foliage ; one leads to the north, along the base of the great rock ; the other to the west, skirting the Wissahikon, on her way to the Schuylkill.

But at the spot where the roads meet, a sight of fresh rustic beauty meets your eye. It is an oaken trough, filled with clear cold water, fresh from the caverns of Wissahikon, with the shadow of overhanging branches between it and the light of day.

The mill-stream, which dashes into the shadows, to the south of the



great rock, passes underneath the bridge, erected between the rock and the oaken trough, sparkling with clear cold water.

Such are the general features of the scene. Yet there are no words in language to paint its full beauty. Who shall tell how the leaves, rising in trembling pyramids of foliage, almost shut out the sky above us? How the stream, now spreading in a pool as clear a mirror, set in a frame of granite, now breaking in foaming waves against the rugged rocks, passes into the shadows of the trees, and is seen, far beyond, flashing into light again, like a soul risen again from the shadows of the grave?

Or, what pencil shall paint the slow-moving clouds that sail over the deep blue, and hover above the Wissahikon, as if gazing upon their white bosom, reflected in the clear waters, far below?

It is beautiful to stand upon the rock, in the summer-time, and feel that God is there, in the white blossoms that float along in the air, as well as in the glimpse of blue sky, seen from overhead, but there was a Night, when the place seemed tenanted by the Good and the Evil Angels of the shadowy world.

The moon rose over the eastern woods. A globe of pale golden light, she hovered on the tops of the leafless trees, and shot her sad beams along the summit of the giant rock, and far down the glen of Wissahikon. That sad light shone upon the stream, as it chafed onward, among rocks of ice, and rocks of stone; it gave a spectral glare to the leafless woods, and revealed a sky, which, deepening into an intense blue, and strown with points of light, looked like a tremulous curtain, hung between man and Eternity. A tremulous curtain, veiling the awful secrets of the World Beyond, and quivering in soft light, ere it was rolled aside.

On the last night of 1774, as the moon rose in the east, you might have seen two figures crouching under the giant rock, and have heard their subdued whispers, breaking the Sabbath stillness of the air.

At their feet dashed the mill-stream, plunging into the Wissahikon, with no bridge shadowing its tumultuous foam. The mill rose in the south, its dark walls encircled by leafless branches. Above them, projecting as it rose, the giant rock flung a deep shadow over the wide forest path.

Seated on a log, beneath that rock, they conversed in whispers. One, a stunted and withered form—like a strong oak, blasted by lightning—brushed the long hair from his face, as he gathered the coarse mantle around his distorted figure. The other, a tall and robust man, in the prime of his manhood, grasped his rifle with a firm hand, and turned his frank, earnest face, toward the horse-like visage of his companion.

"At what hour?"—said a bold voice—it was the voice of the Hunter, Gilbert Morgan.

He gazed into the face of the hunchback, with a sensation of involuntary awe. That long visage, shadowed by the matted hair, and resting on the muscular breast, with the shoulders rising on either side, had a wild, unearthly look. The small white hands were pressed against the hollow cheeks, and a lurid light played around the eyes. It was more like the face of a demon, than the visage of a man.

Stout Gilbert, whose tall form combined, in every outline, a rude beauty with an iron vigor, was awed, not only by the vision of this deformed figure and unnatural face, but by the awful night which encircled him, the deep blue sky, made spectral by the light of the rising moon, the Wissahikon, filling the dell with a never-ceasing echo, the trees, with leafless branches, standing like wierd sentinels by its waters.

"At what hour?" he whispered.

"At the hour of twelve—" said Black David; his voice was soft and musical. "Through the grove of pines, in front of the mansion, into the front door—by this key—and up the stairs. Then, you will turn to the right, traverse a corridor, and discover the small door leading to the tower. The old man—"

"Isaac the Wizard?" asked Gilbert, his voice broken by a tremor.

"Isaac the Wizard!" a smile displayed the white teeth of the Deformed—"Yes, Isaac the Wizard. You will find him in the tower. Secure his gold. And at the hour of one, present yourself at *the House on the opposite side of the Wissahikon*—you remember it?"

Gilbert shuddered. Was it from fear, as a dark Memory rushed upon his soul, or did the accent with which Black David pronounced the italicized words, strike him with involuntary awe?

"You are—you—" he began, but the words died on his lips.

"What am I? Tell me. I have a vast curiosity to know what the good people of the valley and the dell say of me. A poor, deformed wretch—eh?"

He pronounced these words with an inexpressible bitterness.

"Now look you, my friend—" Gilbert spoke in rough yet manly tones—"No one ever yit caught me a-makin' fun of any man's personal appearance. Don't keer how sticky the burr is, only so there's a good shesnut inside. But I was goin' to say——"

"Well?" Black David drew nearer to him. The hunter imagined that he felt the intense light of his eyes, shining into his face. "That you're a queer fellow," whispered Gilbert, as though he had relieved himself of an important secret.

"Queer? How?"

"To day, you're seen in the service of Old Isaac. To-morrow, you are found in the Black-House 'way up the Wissahikon, in the service of the Priest and his Son—the—the—Monk of Wissahikon. You don't seem to have any place to live, and nobody knows much about you, anyhow!"

"Would you like to see me raise the Devil?" said that low musical voice, and again the expression, which we cannot depict, passed over Black David's face.

Gilbert started to his feet, and clutched his rifle with a firmer grasp.

"Take keer, I say! None of your dark tricks here!" and he brought the rifle to his shoulder.

The deformed arose. He raised his white hands. The moon, streaming over the top of the rock, bathed them in soft light, while his face and figure were wrapt in shadow.

There was something horrible to Gilbert, in that face veiled in shadow, while the uplifted hands glowed in the pale moonlight.

"Take keer!" he shouted again, his form agitated by a perceptible tremor—"None of yer devil's tricks on me, I say!"

"Shall I invoke *his presence* from the stream, which spreads black and vague beneath us? On this rock shall I stand and say the words, and speak the spells which will bring to your side—to yours, strong man—the Enemy of Mankind? Oh, you feel your blood curdle, you grow cold with fear—you—you—the stout hunter, who never felt before what it is *to fear!*"

The moon shone upon Gilbert's face. Those brown features were agitated with an intensity of fear. The eyes glassy, the lips parted, the veins along the bared throat writhing as if in extreme physical torture—he looked like an embodied image of fear.

"Take keer!" he growled again—"One word more, and I fire!"

"You have dared to prate of me? You, a miserable earth-worm, whom I can crush with a word? By my soul, I have a strange whim, to punish you for your impertinence. Shall I give you into the power of the spirits who people this wintry air? Shall I speak, and lo! do you not feel it already? That invisible hand, cold as death, pressed against your cheek?"

The stout hunter shook as with an ague-chill. And yet, in his very trembling, he was firm and brave. Awed by Black David's words, chilled by his voice, fascinated by the strange power of his eyes, he raised his rifle, and took deliberate aim at the breast of the hunchback.

"Now raise your Devils, if you kin. Just try it, and I'll put this bullet through yer breast!"

Black David murmured some words in an unknown tongue. A sharp report broke the grave-like silence, and was redoubled in a thousand echoes. Up, slowly into the moonlight floated the blue smoke of the rifle. The aim was deadly; the muzzle almost touched the breast of the victim.

As the smoke rolled away, Gilbert—his brow damp with moisture—started forward, and looked, with dilating eyes, for the mangled form of that victim.



Black David was there, but neither mangled nor bleeding. There, before the affrighted hunter, his horse-like face framed in his matted hair and beard, his small hands uplifted in the moonlight.

The rifle fell from the Hunter's palsied hands.

He had endured much in his time; wandered far away among the gorges of the Alleghanies for days, without food; he had tracked the panther into his lair, deep in the shadows of some pathless cavern, and faced the Red Savage, in his deadliest rage; he was a man of iron nerve and fearless soul. It may be, that his hands were stained with innocent blood, for his life had been nurtured into robust vigor, among scenes and with men of the darkest and most lawless character.

But now he trembled like a child in the dark, frightened at its own footstep. He did not fear the hunchback, with his distorted form, and long unnatural face, but he was afraid of that which palsies the stoutest arm, and chills the firmest heart—that terrible something, which we express in the simple words—

“THE OTHER WORLD!”

Therefore, as the rifle fell from his stiffening fingers, he stood trembling in every nerve, with arms outspread, and face bathed with cold moisture, while the moonlight still glowed upon the white hands of the Deformed.

“Yer no man, but a Devil! I aimed at yer breast—and my eye's good to snuff a candle at a hundred yards! I loaded the rifle myself; 'twas a sure ball, and there yo' ar', 'live as ever!”

In answer to his incoherent exclamations, the voice of Black David broke softly on the stilled air.

“Do you feel the hand upon your cheek? It is cold—very cold, for it is the hand of a dead man. You may turn—but you cannot see it! Still it is there, pressing its icy fingers on your cheek, invisible, yet palpable as life, and cold as death!”

With his small hand, he lifted the matted hair from his forehead. Gilbert beheld it, saw the fair white skin—much fairer and clearer than the lower part of the face—marked by a livid cross, like the half-healed cicatrice of some hideous wound.

“And did you think to kill me?” he cried, in that voice, which, scarcely audible, thrilled the listener to the heart, and startled the stillness with its unearthly accent. “Me? Do you behold that sign?” His eyes gleamed a sad and tender light. “Take the knife from your belt; strike at my heart—strike!”

He flung the mantle from his shoulders. The hideous deformity of his figure was made more painfully distinct, by a close-fitting dress of dark hues, which revealed the large body supported by crooked and slender limbs, the wide chest, with the face resting upon it, the long arms, high shoulders, and back rising in a shapeless hump.

"Take your knife. Strike. Do not fear—the sharp blade may drive the life from this distorted form!"

Gilbert did not touch his knife. His senses were enchained by the eyes of the Deformed; that steady gaze held him, dumb and motionless.

"Let—me—go!" he faltered in a whisper. "Take yer eyes off o' me—I can't move. Mercy—if yo' b'lieve in a God—mercy!"

He fell on his knees, yes, sinking on the snow which covered the sod, and, by its spiritual white, made the clear Wissahikon look black and spectral, he folded his arms upon his brawny chest, and his head drooped slowly, until his face was hidden from the moon.

It seemed to him—the hardy woodsman—as though all power of mind and body had passed from his form into the breast of the hunchback.

Even the power of speech failed him. His senses were dulled by a drowsy languor; the sound of the Wissahikon, roaring over its rocky bed, seemed afar off, and soon died away in a hollow murmur.

Gazing upon the prostrate huntsman, Black David stood erect, with the moonbeams—stealing over the edge of the rock—slowly lighting up his strange face, and brow seared by a livid cross. Around his lips, a smile of inexpressible scorn played fitfully, while the light of his eyes grew more intense and spectral.

"Rise!" he said, after some moments had passed.

The herculean hunter slowly rose, stretching forth his arms with a gesture of pain, like a man who has lain for hours in a cramped and uneasy posture.

"Take up your rifle!"

Gilbert obeyed.

"Go on your way. Do your duty, without fear. At the hour of One—remember—the HOUSE OF THE BROTHERS! Go!"

Retreating toward the rock, Black David pointed to the west, with the delicate fingers of his right hand.

Slowly, Gilbert passed him. Without looking to the right or left, he hurried into the shadows of the narrow dell, through which the mill-stream poured into the Wissahikon. He crossed the brook, now leaping from rock to rock, now passing securely over the ice. Ascending the opposite hill, with one foot advanced towards the west, he turned his head over his shoulder, and, with a shudder, looked back.

Beneath the rock, Black David stood, his form lost in shadow, while the moon played freely over his face, and revealed his white forehead, marked by the livid cross. With his left hand, he raised the matted hair, with the right still pointing to the west—

"When I call, you will come to me!" Gilbert heard his voice, rising in deep emphasis—"Miles may separate us, mountains may intervene, rivers howl between us, still you will hear my voice, and you will obey!"

At the same moment Gilbert saw a form advance from the pines, and

stand in the bright moonlight, on the summit of the rock. It was the figure of a man, whose black attire was tinted by the rays, as, with hands clasped, he stood motionless upon the level summit of the granite mass, his shadowed face turned toward the Wissahikon.

"The Monk!" he cried, and—utterly bewildered by the events of the last hour,—rushed on his westward way, his head bent upon his breast, and his rifle on his shoulder.

Meanwhile, upon the summit of the rock stood the motionless form, clad in a sombre robe reaching to his knees,—the face turned from the moon—and the long, flowing black hair, surmounted by a velvet cap.

His hands were clasped, and the silver cross gleamed faintly on his dark dress. It was a noble form, and the face, wrapt in half-shadow, was softened by an emotion which parted the lips, and gave the large eyes a light at once sad and tender.

Alone upon the rock—the wild woods around—the intense sky above—he stood, while his dark form rose boldly into light, from the snow-covered earth.

He raised his gaze to the sky—it was there, so deep, so bright, so beautiful, like a great curtain, hung between his eyes and that awful World of Eternity, crowded with spirits of Light and Darkness.

The air was breathlessly still. The long prolonged howl of the watchdog came from afar with an unearthly cadence; the waves of the Wissahikon filled the hollows in the rocks with faint murmurs.

Save these sounds, all was still.

The eyes which gleamed from that bronzed face grew brighter and more lustrous, even as they were wet with tears.

For the soul of the young man was elevated and purified, by the supernatural solemnity of the winter night upon the Wissahikon. To him, the great sky was no vague blank in the Universe. It was crowded with the Spirit People of many tongues, tribes and forms. The Stars above were the Homes of Souls, many good, many evil, some lost in crimes, and some pure as the light of God.

And even through the blue sky, he could look up, and see these spirits—or to speak in language which may be more intelligible—these Men and Women of a purer and diviner creation, circling in myriad throngs of light and darkness. Some with their faces glowing ineffable love, and others wearing upon their foreheads the fiery scorn of passion, defiance and despair.

For, from very childhood, he had been taught to believe, that even as the chain of physical existence begins with rudest beasts and almost imperceptible reptiles, and extends upward to Man, so from Man up to God, the chain of Spiritual Life extended in one unbroken line, creation crowding on creation, and tribes of spirits rising above other tribes,



until the universe beheld its supreme source and fountain in the Great Father of Eternity.

Therefore, to him, the beautiful sky did not seem a vague blank in creation, peopled only with stars, that were desert worlds.

Nor did the rivulet, tossing among its ice-covered rocks, nor the leafless trees around it, rising bleakly from the snowy earth, nor the deep glens, sunken here and there on the borders of the gorge of Wissahikon, wear only their external forms of wildness and beauty.

They were peopled with absorbing associations; not a rock but had its own interest, not a tree but waved in the moonlight, stirred by some hand, to him invisible. The very air was thronged—dense—with the Spirit People.

Ere you smile at the young man, and scorn his spiritual belief, let me impress a few facts distinctly on your minds.

He has never passed the space of an hour's journey from the gorge of Wissahikon.

His mind has been shaped in solitude; in an ancient mansion, centered among these woods, he has lived since that hour of childhood, which has but a faint mist, in place of Memory.

For some reason—hereafter to be explained—a solemn charge has been laid upon his soul, never to permit his footsteps to wander from the valley of Wissahikon, nor to gaze long upon the faces of men, much less to enter into the spirit and the purposes of their every-day thoughts.

Within the Block-House, with no companionship save the aged man, his father, and the fair girl, his sister, he has grown up to young manhood. That sister he loves, but it is with a love, calm and serene as the stars.

That Love which burns and devours and maddens, has yet to come!

And he has yet to behold that horrible libel on the Universe of God, that ulcer on the bosom of creation, that foul Congress of demoniac passions, some tinselled with gold, and others naked as unveiled Devils—he has yet, and for the first time to behold—THE GREAT CITY.

Look upon him now, as he stands upon the rock, so serene in his young manhood, his bronzed face softened by emotions vast and ineffable as the great Universe which shuts him in.

His voice is heard; he speaks aloud, while, crouching in the shadow of the very rock on which he stands, Black David hears his every word, and smiles.

“Shall I—I—that have been nurtured among these solitudes, and taught to see God in every flower, to hear his Spirit in every breeze—shall I ever share the tumult and the hatred of the great world, which lies beyond the Wissahikon!”

He paused, and raised his eyes to heaven.

But, in the shadow of the rock, Black David spoke—

"You shall! With the hilt in your hand, and the point to the heart of your foe, you will wield the sword, and feel how deep the joy of shedding blood!"

He did not hear that voice, which, like a mocking echo, spoke, ere his words had died away.

"And woman—shall I ever look upon her, but as some Pure Angel, enshrined in the light flowing from the fountain of her own holiness? This madness of passion—of which the Poets speak—this devouring frenzy, which tramples alike on truth and honor, and reaps its harvest in the desolation of some virgin soul, in the infamy of some unpolluted body—shall it ever burn within my veins?"

Still, from the shadow of the rock, the hunchback answered, with his smile, that was cold as the moonbeam playing on the snow:

"It shall! Even at this moment, she gazes proudly in her mirror, and surveys the passionate beauty of her heaving breast, and wonders when he that is to love her will appear!"

Still this voice, speaking its scorn and its prophecy from the shadow, did not reach the ears of the young man who stood upon the rock.

With his face, so bold and thoughtful in every outline, hallowed by an emotion that was very much like Prayer—Prayer at once sublime and voiceless—he uncovered his brow, and his long black hair floated freely on the wind.

His lustrous eyes upraised, he stretched toward the sky his sinewy arm, and again his bold deep voice startled the Sabbath stillness—

"Here be my lot forever, O Father! Here, where Thy name is written by the stars in the bosom of the waters, and the heart dwells with itself, and has no ambition but to tremble nearer to its God! Here, as long as my soul wears this drapery of mortality, may I dwell, and seek no purer joy than to lead my father softly down the last steps of life that lie between him and the grave, and know no deeper care than to watch the soul of my stainless sister—and love it more serenely—as it blossoms into its perfect bloom!"

As he spoke, a voice, sudden and abrupt, sounded at his side—

"LORD OF ARDENHEIM"—

He turned with a sudden gesture, and saw a deformed figure, bending respectfully, nay, in an attitude of servile obedience, before him.

"It is you, David?" he cried, somewhat startled by the voice, and the strange words, which had been uttered, so abruptly, in his very ear. "The poor hunchback, whose reason is lost in a hopeless chaos!" he muttered to himself.

At the same time, clasping his hands and bending his head, until the matted hair concealed his face, David stood before the young man, like a servant who awaits his master's commands.

"What were those strange words which you uttered, but a moment past?" he said, looking in compassion upon the deformed wretch.

"Nothing—my good master, nothing—only—but poor David's mind wanders. David is cold—he cannot remember what he has heard. An old man in danger. Yo' see the robbers are a-goin' to murder him; so I heard them say. An old man with white hair—alone in a big house—and a daughter——poor David's brain is very—very dark——"

"There is some dark truth in this chaos of confused memories"—the thought flashed over the mind of Paul Ardenheim—"Robbers, did you say? An old man in danger? Where, David—speak to Paul—he is your friend. Tell him of these robbers."

In his compassion for the wandering intellect, the bodily and mental decrepitude of Black David, Paul was wont to speak to him as to a wayward child.

"It was—it was——" and the hunchback laid his hand upon his forehead, as if in the attempt to fix some vagrant memory.

"Yes—the robbers—the old man——" gasped Paul, with impatient earnestness.

"On the Wissahikon——" slowly exclaimed Black David—"The mansion on the hill near the Schuylkill, under the tall pines——"

"Isaac Van Behme?" asked Paul, laying his hand on the hunchback's arm.

"Yes—Isaac the Wizard!" cried Black David, with a sudden joy flashing from his eyes—"That's the old man. I heerd 'em jist now—under the rock—they've gone to murder him. You see, poor David is weak. Paul is strong. And——"

There came over the young man's face an expression of determination, which compressed his lips, and gave a deeper light to his eyes. His arching brows—black and almost crescent-shaped—were shadowed by a slight frown. As he turned to the moonlight, the silver cross rose and fell, on his heaving chest.

"Thanks, good David," he said, kindly pressing the hunchback's hand. "By the blessing of God, I will save the old man!"

He descended from the rock, and presently, his form, attired in its sombre robes, was seen on the opposite side of the mill-stream, on the very spot where Gilbert had stood and looked back, but a few moments before.

And from the top of the solitary rock, Black David contemplated him, folding his arms, and standing as motionless as the great mass beneath his feet, as he beheld that commanding figure—the face whose features were shadowed in the gloom—the breast glittering with the silver cross.

The eyes of Black David grew vivid in their light, as, brushing aside the matted hair from his forehead, he disclosed the Dark Cross, traced on its fair hues.



“ You go on a strange pathway, my Lord Paul, Count of Ardenheim and Baron of Lyndulfe ! Nero was once a dreaming boy, and Judas a pure Disciple ! Borgia, the Pope, was, in his young manhood, an example of generous friendship and chivalrous honor. And yet Nero made merry music while Rome was in flames—Nero looked with licentious curiosity upon the dead mother, whom his own hand had slain. Judas betrayed the Lord, who had broken bread with him, and sent the Man-God who had loved him, to an ignominious death. Borgia became the Demon-Pope, the lover of his own child, the——”

He paused, and the moon, shining upon his brow, scarred by the livid cross, revealed the strange agitation of his large eyes, his quivering lips, and hollow cheeks, as once more he whispered in his musical voice——

“ You go on a strange pathway, my Lord Paul, Count of Ardenheim and Baron of Lyndulfe !”

And the words had not passed his lips, when Paul disappeared among the shadows of the leafless trees.

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## CHAPTER FIFTH.

### THE MONASTERY.

ERE we follow the footsteps of Paul Ardenheim, let us turn back in our history, and behold a scene which occurred some months before, when the blush of June was upon the Wissahikon woods.

It stood in the shadows of the Wissahikon woods, that ancient Monastery, its dark walls canopied by the boughs of a gloomy pine, interwoven with leaves of grand old oaks.

From the waters of the wood-hidden stream, a winding road led up to its gates ; a winding road overhung with tall, rank grass, and sheltered from the light by the thick branches above.

A Monastery ? Yes, a Monastery, here amid the wilds of Wissahikon, in the year of Grace, 1774 ; a Monastery built upon the soil of William Penn !

Let me paint it for you, at the close of this calm summer day.

The beams of the sun, declining far in the west, shoot between the thickly gathered leaves, and light up the green sward around those massive gates, and stream with sudden glory over the dark old walls. It

is a Monastery, yet here we behold no swelling dome, no Gothic turrets, no walls of massive stone. A huge square edifice, built one hundred years ago of the trunks of giant oaks and pines, it rises amid the woods, like the temple of some long-forgotten religion. The roof is broken into many fantastic forms;—here it rises in a steep gable, yonder the heavy logs are laid prostrate; again they swell into a shapeless mass, as though stricken by a hurricane.

Not many windows are there in the dark old walls, but to the west four large square spaces, framed in heavy pieces of timber, break on your eye, while on the other sides the old house presents one blank mass of logs, rising on logs.

No: not one blank mass, for at this time of year, when the breath of June hides the Wissahikon in a world of leaves, the old Monastery looks like a grim soldier, who, scathed by time and battle, wears yet thick wreaths of laurel over his armor, and about his brow.

Green vines girdle the ancient house on every side. From the squares of the dark windows, from the intervals of the massive logs, they hang in luxuriant festoons, while the shapeless roof is all one mass of leaves.

Nay, even the wall of logs which extends around the old house, with a ponderous gate to the west, is green with the touch of June. Not a trunk but blooms with some drooping vine; even the gateposts, each a solid column of oak, seem to wave to and fro, as the summer breeze plays with their drapery of green leaves.

It is a sad, still hour. The beams of the sun stream with fitful splendor over the green sward. That strange old mansion seems as sad and desolate as the tomb. But suddenly—hark! Do you hear the clanking of those bolts, the crashing of the unclosing gates?

The gates creak slowly aside!—let us steal behind this cluster of pines, and gaze upon the inhabitants of the Monastery, as they come forth for their evening walk.

Three figures issue from the opened gates. An old man, whose withered features and white hairs are thrown strongly into the fading light by his long robe of dark velvet. On one arm leans a young girl, also dressed in black, her golden hair falling—not in ringlets—but in rich masses, to her shoulders. She bends upon his arm, and with that living smile upon her lips, and in her eyes, looks up into his face.

On the other arm, a young man, whose form, swelling with the proud outlines of early manhood, is attired in a robe or gown, dark as his father's, while his bronzed face, shaded by curling brown hair, seems to reflect the silent thought written upon the old man's brow.

They pace slowly along the sod. Not a word is spoken. The old man raises his eyes, and lifts the square cap from his brow—look! how that golden beam plays along his brow, while the evening breeze tosses his white hairs. There is much suffering, many deep traces of the Past,

written on his wrinkled face, but the light of a wild enthusiasm beams from his blue eyes.

The young man—his dark eyes, wildly glaring, fixed upon the sod—moves by the old man's side, but speaks no word.

The girl, that image of maidenly grace, nurtured into beauty within an hour's journey of the city, and yet afar from the world, still bends over that aged arm, and looks smilingly into that withered face, her glossy hair waving in the summer wind.

Who are these, that come hither, pacing at the evening hour, along the wild moss? The father and his children!

What means that deep, strange light, flashing not only from the blue eyes of the father, but from the dark eyes of his son?

Does it need a second glance to tell you, that it is the light of Fanaticism, that distortion of Faith—the wild glare of Superstition, that deformity of Religion?

The night comes slowly down. Still the Father and Son pace the ground in silence, while the breeze freshens and makes low music among the leaves.—Still the young girl, bending over the old man's arm, smiles tenderly in his face, as though she would drive the sadness from his brow with one gleam of her mild blue eyes.

At last—within the shadows of the gate, their faces lighted by the last gleam of the setting sun—the old man and his son stand like figures of stone, while each grasps a hand of the young girl.

Is it not a strange yet beautiful picture? The old Monastery forms one dense mass of shade; on either side extends the darkening forest, yet here, within the portals of the gate, the three figures are grouped, while a warm, soft mass of tufted moss, spreads before them. The proud manhood of the son, contrasted with the white locks of the father, the tender yet voluptuous beauty of the girl relieving the thought and sadness which glooms over each brow.

Hold—the Father presses the wrist of his Son with a convulsive grasp—hush! Do you hear that low deep whisper?

“At last, it comes to my soul; the Fulfilment of Prophecy!” he whispers and is silent again, but his lip trembles and his eye glares.

“But the time—Father—the time?” the Son replies in the same deep voice, while his eye, dilating, fires with the same feeling that swells his Father's heart.

“*The last day of this year—the third hour after midnight—THE DELIVERER WILL COME!*”

These words may seem lame and meaningless, when spoken again, but had you seen the look that kindled over the old man's face, his white hand raised above his head, had you heard his deep voice swelling through the silence of the woods, each word would ring on your ear, as though it quivered from a spirit's tongue.



Then the old man and his son knelt on the sod, while the young girl—looking in their faces with wonder and awe—sank silently beside them.

The tones of Prayer broke upon the stillness of the darkening woods.

Tell us the meaning of this scene. Wherefore call this huge edifice, whose dark logs are clothed in green leaves, by the old-world name of Monastery? Who are these—father, son and daughter—that dwell within its walls?

Seventeen years ago—from this year of Grace, 1774,—there came to the wilds of the Wissahikon, a man in the prime of mature manhood, clad in a long, dark robe, with a cross of silver gleaming on his breast. With one arm he gathered to his heart a smiling babe, a little girl, whose golden hair floated over his dark dress like sunshine over a pall; by the other hand he led a dark-haired boy.

His name, his origin, his object in the wilderness, no one knew; but purchasing the ruined Block-House, which bore on its walls and timbers the marks of many an Indian fight, he shut himself out from all the world. His son, his daughter, grew up together in this wild solitude. The voice of prayer was often heard, at dead of night, by the belated huntsman, swelling from the silence of the lonely house.

By slow degrees, whether from the cross which the old stranger wore upon his breast, or from the sculptured images which had been seen within the walls of his forest home, the place was called—the Monastery—and its occupant the Priest.

Had he been drawn from his native home by crime? Was his name enrolled among the titled and the great of his Father-land, Germany? Or, perchance, he was one of those stern visionaries, the Pietists of Germany, who, lashed alike by Catholic and Protestant persecutors, brought to the wilds of Wissahikon their beautiful Fanaticism?

For that Fanaticism, professed by a band of brothers, who, years before, driven from Germany, came here to Wissahikon, built their Monastery, and worshipped God, without a written creed, was beautiful.

It was a wild belief, tinctured with the dreams of Alchemists, it may be, yet still full of faith in God, and love to man. Persecuted by the Protestants of Germany, as it was by the Catholics of France, it still treasured the Bible as its law and the Cross as its symbol.

The Monastery, in which the brothers of the faith lived for long years, was situated on the brow of a hill, not a mile from the old Block-House. Here the Brothers had dwelt, in the deep serenity of their own hearts, until one evening they gathered in their garden, around the form of their dying father, who yielded his soul to God in their midst, while the setting sun and the calm silence of universal nature gave a strange grandeur to the scene.

But it was not with this Brotherhood that the stranger of the Block-House held communion.

His communion was with the dark-eyed son, who grew up, drinking the fanaticism of his father, in many a midnight watch; with the golden-haired daughter, whose smile was wont to drive the gloom from his brow, the wearing anxiety from his heart.

Who was the stranger? No one knew. The farmer of the Wissahikon had often seen his dark-robed form, passing like a ghost under the solemn pines; the wandering huntsman had many a time, on his midnight ramble, heard the sounds of prayer breaking along the silence of the woods from the Block-House walls: yet still the life, origin, objects of the stranger were wrapt in impenetrable mystery.

Would you know more of his life? Would you penetrate the mystery of this dim old Monastery, shadowed by the thickly-clustered oaks and pines, shut out from the world by the barrier of impenetrable forests?

Would you know the meaning of those strange words, uttered by the old man, on the calm summer evening?

Come with me, then—at midnight—on the last night of 1774. We will enter the Block-House together, and behold a scene, which, derived from a tradition of the past, is well calculated to thrill the heart with a deep awe.

It is midnight: there is snow on the ground: the leafless trees fling their bared limbs against the cold blue of the starlit sky.

The old Block-House rises dark and gloomy from the snow, with the heavy trees extending all around.

The wind sweeps through the woods, not with a boisterous roar, but the strange sad cadence of an organ, whose notes swell away through the arches of a dim cathedral aisle.

Who would dream that living beings tenanted this dark mansion, arising in one black mass from the bed of snow, its huge timbers revealed in various indistinct forms, by the cold clear light of the stars? Centred in the midst of the desolate woods, it looks like the abode of spirits, or like some strange sepulchre, in which the dead of long-past ages lie entombed.

There is no foot-track on the winding road—the snow presents one smooth white surface—yet the gates are thrown wide open, as if ready for the coming of a welcome guest.

Through this low, narrow door—also flung wide open—along this dark corridor, we will enter the Monastery.

In the centre of this room, illumined by the light of two tall white candles, sits the old man, his slender form clad in dark velvet, with the silver cross gleaming on his bosom, buried in the cushions of an oaken chair.

His slender hands are laid upon his knees—he sways slowly to and fro—while his large blue eye, dilating with a wild stare, is fixed upon the opposite wall.

Hush! Not a word—not even the creaking of a footstep—for this old man, wrapped in his thoughts, sitting alone in the centre of this strangely furnished room, fills us with involuntary reverence.

Strangely furnished room? Yes, circular in form, with a single doorway; huge panels of dark oaken wainscot rise from the bared floor to the gloomy ceiling. Near the old man arises a white altar, on which the candles are placed, its spotless curtain floating down to the floor. Between the candles, you behold a long, slender flagon of silver, a wreath of laurel leaves, fresh gathered from the Wissahikon hills, and a Holy Bible, bound in velvet, with antique clasps of gold.

Behind the altar, gloomy and sullen, as if struggling with the shadows of the room, arises a cross of Iron.

On yonder small fire-place, rude logs of oak and hickory send up their mingled smoke and flame.

The old man sits there, his eyes growing wilder in their gaze every moment, fixed upon the solitary door. Still he sways to and fro, and now his thin lips move, and a faint murmur fills the room.

*“He will come!”* mutters the Priest of the Wissahikon, as common rumor named him. *“At the third hour after midnight the Deliverer will come!”*

Yet while the aged man in the Block-house, after weary years of thought, awaits the great end of his long vigil of Prayer, we will follow the footsteps of his son, and witness scenes of novel and absorbing interest.

It is now the hour of twelve, on the Last Night of 1774. While the guests are feasting in the farm-house and dancing the old year to his grave, while Gilbert goes on his way of Blood, and Paul on his errand of Peace, the moon rises higher in the cloudless sky, and bathes the winding gorge—the snowy hills—the wilderness of leafless trees, in light, at once sad and sepulchral.

Yonder, on the summit of the broad hill, which rises on the south of Wissahikon, we behold a stone mansion, centred in a grove of tall pines, whose branches are bent with the weight of snow.

Through these thickly-woven pines, the moonlight comes in uncertain gleams; now the level space in front of the hall door is alive with belts of silvery light, that move hurriedly over the frozen snow, and again a dense shadow broods around the mansion.

Its outlines are wrapped in gloom. Before the door, a fallen statue of some heathen deity lies half covered in snow; the shutters are closed; the whole place wears an aspect of desolation.



Yet, from the circular tower which rises from the centre of the roof, a vivid ray flashes far over the snow, until it is lost in the brightness, yonder, beyond the grove of pines.

And while this light flashes from the tower of the mansion, on the southern hill of Wissahikon, on the opposite shore, not more than five hundred yards away, another ray gleams from the leafless trees, and trembles on the bosom of the Wissahikon.

Deep sunken between two high hills, an old house stands there, encircled with dreary brushwood, with the trees gathered thickly around it, and the shutters on its narrow windows closed like the portals of a grave-vault. Through the closed shutters, that faint and wandering ray streams out upon the night, while the subdued echoes from its secret chambers break at sudden intervals upon the Sabbath stillness of the air.

First we will turn our gaze toward the grand old mansion, on the southern hills. It is the house of Isaac Van Behme, called Isaac the Wizard.

Then to the deserted house, sunken in the sombre hollow, on the northern shore of Wissahikon, where the closed shutters and impenetrable walls cannot altogether drown the sounds which awake the echoes of its gloomy chambers.

Strange sounds, gloomy echoes ! The deserted house is looked upon with superstitious fear, by the people of the hill-side and forest. It is haunted ; ghosts are seen gliding through the shadows of its encircling thickets ; the Great Fiend himself comes nightly to visit its chambers. Years ago, when it was a comfortable home, the country residence of a foreigner, who sojourned awhile in the city, and spent his summer hours beside the Wissahikon, a guest was murdered by its very hearthstone, and buried in its cellar. So run the vague superstitions of the Wissahikon folks, in regard to the ruined house.

It is indeed haunted, but by Ghosts or by living Men, who appear like ghosts, and come and go, under the mantle of an impenetrable mystery ? The Great Fiend, in truth, does often visit its walls, but not the Satan whom men fear, armed with grotesque terrors, formidable with hoof and horns and tail.

That Fiend is the Invisible Head of a Secret Organization, which extends from these woods of Wissahikon, over the continent of America, and only speaks to hear its mandates re-echoed by the thousand Lodges of the Old World and the New.

## CHAPTER SIXTH.

## THE WIZARD'S DAUGHTER.

BEFORE the mirror stood a Maiden, gazing upon the reflected beauty of her dark eyes, the reflected loveliness of her half-bared bosom——

—These words may seem very abrupt and somewhat rude, but when you have taken in the entire details of the picture, you will agree with me, that it was a sight altogether interesting—perchance beautiful.——

It was not an oval mirror, framed in a narrow rim of carved walnut, and placed upon an antique dressing-bureau. Nor was it encircled by a frame of showy gilt, with golden flowers and golden Cupids strown about its brightness.

It was a square mirror, framed by the dark paneling of the maiden's chamber, and reaching from the ceiling to the floor.

Before it, with the light shining on her forehead, and a robe of dark velvet flowing from her left shoulder over her form, and flowing in folds by no means constrained or formal, stood a girl of eighteen years, whose eyes, and brows, and hair were all intensely black.

Her complexion was brown, but a clear, rich brown, more beautiful to look upon than the fairest blonde. For in the centre of each swelling cheek, and on her lips, through whose intervals her white teeth were seen, that brown complexion bloomed into the rosiest red.

The eyes were dark and very bright, but the half-closed lids and the long lashes veiled their brightness, and subdued it into a dreamy languor.

Her hair was turned aside from her forehead, and bound at the back of her head, in a mass of glossy blackness. But part of it, not so much a tress, as two or three tresses linked together, escaping from the cincture, floated down her cheek, and made her bared shoulder look more white and beautiful, as it trembled over its faultless outlines.

In her left hand she held the lamp, while, with her right arm bent, she clasped the mantle to her bosom, that mantle, whose loose-flowing folds marked the outlines of her shape, and left her naked feet bare to the light.

The light streamed warmly over her face, tinted her dark hair, and showed a gleam of the white bosom, heaving beneath the golden fringe of the black mantle.

That face is full of character. It speaks the soul. The languid eyelids, and the parted lips; the cheek glowing into crimson, and the eye veiled in a dewy moisture—all speak of a warm, nay, a passionate organization.

But the white forehead, rendered more distinct in every outline by the

black hair, tossed aside in glossy masses, tells of an intellectual—perhaps an ambitious organization.

Nor does the form, whose outlines are betrayed by the loosely flowing folds of velvet, lack expression, at once decided and bewitching.

The bared left arm glows softly in the light, with its clear skin and round outlines, and tapers into the white hand, whose palm is velvety whose fingers seem like transparent marble, warmed by a rosy radiance.

The bust is round, full, like a flower, that only demands another moment, to ripen it into perfect bloom. The waist is slender, but by no means like the waist of a fashion-plate or a wasp. The small feet, relieved by the dark matting on which they rest, harmonize with the hands, and indicate, by their delicacy of outline, the voluptuous fulness of the maiden's form.

And in the mirror, framed in the dark paneling, and reaching from the ceiling to the floor, she beholds that form, and gazes in dreamy languor upon the warm loveliness of her face.

The room, in which she stands, may claim our passing glance. It is square, paneled with dark wood, with a door in the south, a recess on the north, a window looking to the east, over a waste of frozen snow, just silvered by the rising moon.

The dark wood is carved with the faces of nymphs, fauns, satyrs, cupids and devils, with here and there a mask, or a cluster of flowers, or a garland of leaves.

The recess is veiled from our sight by curtains of purple tapestry, that look black in the candle-light, and fall with their golden fringe upon the floor.

The floor is polished, until it resembles a mirror; the dark matting on which the maiden stands, an antique dressing-bureau, and two chairs, cumbrous with carvings and embroidery, alone break the uniformity of its glittering surface.

The curtains of snowy whiteness, which sometimes veil the window, are now drawn aside, and the moonlight comes through the narrow panes, and shines in a line of light along the floor.

Altogether, it is a beautiful picture; this room, paneled with dark wood, with a beautiful girl standing in its centre, the light shining above her head, revealing another maiden, as lovely as herself, smiling upon her from the mirror, into whose brightness she is gazing.

And as she stands there, surveying with voluptuous languor the image of her own loveliness, reflected in the mirror, the dead silence is broken by a sudden, sharp sound.

The mirror moves—it trembles like a smooth lake into which a pebble is thrown—it passes slowly aside, and disappears within the panel. A deep recess is visible, where, but a moment since, the mirror shone.

The maiden trembles, she utters a sudden cry of terror, and sinks on



her knees, the robe still clasped to her bosom, her unbound hair waving over her shoulders.

Her cheek becomes as pale as death. No longer veiled in languid moisture, no longer hidden under the downcast lid, her eye dilates—flashes with terror.

There is a form in the recess—is it but an Apparition roused from the shadows of the Other World, or the form of a human being?

The maiden raises her eyes—for a moment the deathly paleness of her face struggles with a rosy bloom—and then, blushing over her cheek, her neck and her bosom, which pants suddenly into light, that flush fires her face with a warm, voluptuous beauty.

With a gesture of involuntary joy, she raises her arms, and casts her fallen tresses aside from her white shoulder—

“The Monk of Wissahikon!”

And once more, over the cheek, and brow, and bosom, she blushes like a new-born summer morning.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTH.

### THE PHIAL OF ETERNAL YOUTH.

AT the same moment, in another apartment of the Wizard's mansion, a far different scene was in progress.

Let us leave the chamber of the maiden, and pass along the corridor, lighted by a hanging lamp, which reveals the wide stairway, descending to the ground floor of the mansion, and also shines upon the narrow door, whose panels break the uniformity of the oaken wainscot. That narrow door conceals the confined staircase leading upward into the tower, on the summit of the mansion.

The lamp, or rather lantern, hangs from the ceiling, right above the wide stairway, and throws but a faint light over its windings while it glows brightly on the narrow door.

A step is heard, like the subdued and stealthy tread of an armed man, and presently we discern a figure in the darkness of the stairway—it slowly ascends—and in a moment, the light discloses the face of Gilbert Morgan, shadowed by a look of sullen ferocity.

He leans against the railings of the stairway, and bends his head to one side, in the attitude of one who listens intently for the faintest sound.

One foot on the stairway, and one on the corridor, his right arm rests on the mahogany railing, while his left hand, dropped at his side, grasps the unsheathed hunting-knife.

And as he listens, the light discloses that almost gigantic form, enveloped in the blue hunting-shirt, which, leaving the throat bare, falls to the knees, edged with white fur, while the brown face—thrown into bold relief by the darkness of the stairway—works in every nerve, as with the impulse of plunder and carnage.

He listens—lips compressed, eyes shadowed by the down-drawn brows—but all is still.

One step, stealthy as a panther's tread, toward the door of the maiden's chamber. His bent head touches the dark panels; all silent, not a sound meets his ear. Then, underneath the swinging lantern he stands again, and his face is covered by a dark mask, which, tied around the forehead, reaches to the mouth, and leaves only the lower part of the visage exposed to the light. With the knife in his right hand, he approaches the narrow door, lifts the latch, and places his foot upon the first step of the dark staircase.

The sound of voices, rendered faint by distance, breaks indistinctly on his ears. Without a word he enters the door, and in the darkness ascends the stairway. The walls touch his shoulders on either side; the ceiling is so low, that he is forced to bend his head upon his breast, as he ascends.

Those words become more distinct, and after twenty steps are passed, a ray of light streams through the intervals of a curtain, and glimmers out upon the blackness of the stairway.

That curtain supplies the place of a door, and separates the haunt of the Wizard from the staircase.

Gilbert is on the topmost step; knife in hand he approaches the curtain. As the ray flashes over his masked face, he stealthily advances, and looks within.

“It is the appointed time!”

The rude hunter, bent on a deed of violence, swayed by invisible hands to an act of midnight plunder, felt a superstitious thrill pervade his veins, at the sound of that voice.

It must be confessed, that the scene which he beheld, might have chilled with awe a stouter heart, a bolder brain than his.

A small lamp, glittering like polished silver, hung by a chain from the dome-like ceiling, and cast a pure and spiritual light over the place.

It was a circular room, not more than twenty feet in diameter. The walls were hung with parchments, inscribed with Hebrew and Arabic characters. A recess was filled with massive volumes, whose dusty covers, and silver clasps, bore the traces of a venerable age. On one side, hung a skeleton, the white skull and hollow orbits glaring in the

clear light. Not far removed, a shapeless mass, enveloped in a brown cloth, tattered with age, and covered with dust, stood erect against the wall. That shapeless mass was once a living soul; a thousand years ago, it trod the soil of the New World, perchance a warrior armed for battle, or it may be, a Priest of some forgotten creed, with the knife of sacrifice in his hand. It is an Indian Mummy, exhumed from a mound on the far western prairies.

It was in the centre of the room, whose walls were crowded with strange and contrasted details, that a picture of some interest was disclosed by the rays of the hanging lamp.

An old man bent over a corse, a knife in his hand, while his blue eyes shone from his withered face with a wild unearthly light. He was clad in a black gown, whose loose folds concealed the outlines of his shrunken limbs.

The corse, extended on a board which rested on tressels, was half-concealed by a white cloth, which swept in careless folds from the waist to the feet. But the broad chest, the sinewy throat, the dark-red visage, were bare; the face, wrinkled by age, wore, even in death, a look of iron defiance.

It was the dead body of the Chief, Yoconok.

Opposite the old man, crouching on the floor, the figure of the deformed man, known as Black David, was visible. Resting his cheek upon his hand, he gazed upon him steadily, his eyes almost hidden by the thick meshes of his long hair. With that pale face, encircled by the dark beard and hair, quivering with half-suppressed laughter, Black David looked like some Demon, summoned by the craft of the Wizard to aid in his unholy task.

"It is the appointed time. I am about to behold the great result of the ceaseless toil of twenty-one years. For twenty-one years, by night and day, in the cell beneath this house, I have watched for the moment when the liquid of immortal life should greet my eyes. The liquid is in my hand; this phial contains those priceless drops, every one of which is worth an hundred years of life. But thou canst not comprehend me, David—nature, in giving thee a body hideously deformed, has not supplied the lack of manly beauty with the gift of an intelligent soul. Thou canst but aid me with thy brute strength. Rise, David. Watch the hour-glass on yonder shelf. When its sands are run, the dead will rise—this cold image of clay become a young and vigorous man!"

Black David rose, and, gliding to the recess, glanced upon the hour-glass. Its sands were well nigh run. Then, sinking upon the floor again, he placed his face within his hands, and observed the old man, with an unvarying gaze.

It was wonderful to mark the energy which lighted up that withered face, and shone without ceasing, in the clear blue eyes. It was the



energy of a mistaken but sincere enthusiasm, the resolution of a Fanaticism nursed into unnatural vigor by the delusions of a long life.

"He shall rise! Young and beautiful, I will make of his beauty and his youth, the unfailing instruments of my will. When I have raised the dead, changed death into life, then will the rest of my great task become plain and palpable. First, the dead must be raised, then baser metals may be transmuted into gold. So read the lessons of the sages, so speak they all, from Apollonius of Tryana down to Paracelsus and Agrippa!"

"Gold? Ho—ho! What will *you* do with gold—" sneered Black David, as he looked steadily into the old man's face. "Why, Master, you've one foot in the grave already, and 'tother is slippin' arter it. Eh—o-o-h! I see—you want it for your coffin!"

"Poor wretch!" muttered Isaac in a tone of deep pity—"He speaks the language of the world. But I will use him as an instrument in my great design. When I am dead, he will apply the liquid to my cold lips, and the old man, withered by the toil of a long life—the limbs shrunk, the face wrinkled, the heart chilled—shall start into being, with hope in his veins, and young manhood sparkling in his eyes!"

Black David drew near the corse, while Isaac was speaking; he laid his hand upon the frowning brow of the dead man.

"Dost say 'un will come to life again?" he said, with an idiotic smile and vacant stare. "No! It ain't possible, Master Behme! He be stone dead—see!"

Gilbert, from his place of concealment, beheld the Deformed lift the naked arm of the Indian—sway it carelessly to and fro—and then dash it with some violence upon his broad chest.

The hunter trembled from head to foot, not so much with fear of the Wizard, as with a sensation of creeping awe, which chilled his veins, whenever he saw the cold gleam of the hunchback's eyes.

But, trembling from head to foot, he placed the knife in his belt again, and in the darkness, felt the lock of his pistol.

"That ar' cripple's a born devil; but as for Isaac, I'll see what he's made of!" he muttered—"He must'nt cut any of his *shines* over the Ingin's dead carcase, while I'm about!"

"Do not touch the dead—" said Isaac with an energetic gesture—"Back from the corse, I say, and watch while I make the last experiment. The time will come, David, when you will have to do a deed like this—mark me, therefore, so that you may call your Master back to life, when he is dead."

He bent over the corse, holding in one hand the scalpel, or dissecting-knife, while in the other he grasped a small glass phial.

Black David approached, and watched him with great earnestness, his face lengthening with an expression of vacant wonder, most ludicrous to behold.

"Y-a-a-s, Master—" he drawled—"I sees!"

"The born devil!" muttered Gilbert, behind the curtain—"I'll be bound he plays old Isaac some cursed trick before he's many minutes older. Jist look at his face—as simple as a school-boy arter a good lickin'—and yet the very Devil's in them eyes!"

"When the moment is come, David, I will describe a Cross—thus—with the point of the knife, on the breast of the dead man. Pronouncing the awful name of God—which the High Priest of the Jews uttered but once a year, and that in the Holy of Holies—pronouncing **THE NAME** which has been lost to the mass of mankind for thousands of years, I will pour a drop of this liquid into the wound, made by the knife. Yet, mark ye, it must be poured into the very centre of the Cross, else is the charm in vain, and the elixir without power."

"Then, Master—" mumbled Black David, twisting his fingers in the meshes of his hair.

"Even as prussic acid, applied to the lips, kills at once—kills ere the hand that applied it falls to the side—so will this liquid, poured on the Cross, which is cut into the flesh with the knife, bring the dead to life, ere a second is gone.—In a few moments, David, you will see it done!"

The old man stood contemplating the slender phial, which was filled with a colorless and transparent liquid. A look of strange sadness came over his face, as he muttered an incoherent soliloquy:

"I was young; my step firm, my eye bright; youth in my veins, hope in my eye. I loved; there was a wife, a child in my home. A gorgeous home amid the hills of Yorkshire, where the proud and beautiful came thronging, to pay their homage to the—**WEALTHY COMMONER**. Isaac Van Behme was then the owner of millions. Ah, I was afraid that I might die—be gathered to a cold vault, and leave my wealth to others. Then a yearning desire sprung up within me, and changed my nature. I was, indeed, born again. To live forever on the earth—to fear no decay—to create gold at will, from the baser metals—to be immortal at once, in the power of youth and in gold! My wife died—I cared not. That one desire became the great passion of my being. I interrogated the Past—I wrung knowledge from the writings of the ancient seers—I grappled with Death itself, and besought the answer to my question, 'In what part of the human frame does the Principle of Life make its dwelling?'

"Nay—I tracked the dark avenues of the gold mine, and sought day after day, year after year, to look upon the Great Laboratory of Nature, and learn the process, by which she turns base lead and copper into gold. The end of my toil is near. The old man, hidden in this lonely valley, shall soon go forth again into the great world; he shall become once more the comrade of Kings; his child may perchance feel the weight of a crown upon her brows!"

With his large blue eye fixed upon the slender phial, he paced along

the floor, the gown floating loosely around his shrunken limbs, while the clear rays of the lamp shone warmly upon his venerable hair.

As he paced along, absorbed in his wild fanaticism, Black David, crouching near the corse with his face resting between his hands, looked up, from beneath his bushy eyebrows, laughing all over his colorless face, as he muttered——

“Fool! Would he might gain his wish, and know at once, that hell has no curse so horrible, as the blessing he desires—*eternal life on earth, gold without end.*”

Gilbert felt a strange pity melt his rude heart, as he gazed upon the old man's face. There was an overwhelming desire, written on every withered line; as the eyes shone in deep clear light, and the lips grew tremulous, the hunter heard him whisper without ceasing these words——

“Youth—Gold! Gold—Youth! Youth—Gold!”

And so the withered Fanatic paced the floor of the strange room, grasping, in those two words, the great desire of the whole world of mankind, while, crouching like an embodied scorn, near his feet, Black David muttered his answering echo:

“Death! Sleep! Sleep—death! To die and to forget!” and over his sneering face there came an expression of unutterable anguish. “To-day——” he murmured, as Isaac paced the floor, unconscious of his presence——“To-day, in these woods, I saw a child lie dead upon its Mother's knee. I would give all the gold in the universe, all the life in eternity, to be that child!”

The face of the Deformed expressed the very intensity of despair.

“The time draws near. In a moment it will be here. David, rise——take the dead man by the arms. It will need all your strength to restrain him, in the dread moment when he uncloses his eyes, and feels that he lives again.”

Black David, standing at the head of the corse, grasped its bony arms by the wrists, and with head bent, and the tangled hair falling over his face, seemed to await the commands of the enthusiast.

“How dost know 'un will rise?” he muttered suddenly.

“Have I not read it in their works—the venerable Seers of the Ages?” exclaimed Isaac, pointing with a tremulous hand toward the recess——“Yea—the Dead have come to me, and spoken of the Great Secret, with their livid lips.”

He paused, and stood motionless beside the corse, while a tremor shook his frame.

“Yes—HE has appeared to me, HE, most sad and yet terrible of all the Fallen Angels! His pale forehead, seared with the mark of eternal anguish, his hair streaming in waves of lurid light,——I see him now——again I hear his voice. ‘*In the first moments of the new-born year, the dead will come to life!*’”



Why did Black David's distorted frame quiver like a withered reed in the winter wind? We cannot read the expression of his face, for his head is drooped; the matted hair falls around it like a lion's mane.

"How much money hast spent, Master? Twenty-one years—a long time—a very, very long time. It has swallowed a world of gold—eh? Master?"

"Have you not watched the Sacred Fire, burning for ever, in the cell beneath the house? You have seen me pour the gold in the alembic, with an unsparing hand—"

"Y-e-s! Handfuls on it at a time. It looks beautiful like, and clinks so pleasant like—the round gold, the yellow gold, the sunshiny gold!"

"When I began this search I was worth millions! Now the last wreck of my wealth—you know it well, honest David—is concealed in the small chest, which lies beyond yonder curtain, in the darkness, at the head of the stairway. It is only a thousand doubloons—only a thousand."

Black David raised his face, and looked toward the curtain. Gilbert felt the glance of his eyes resting upon him, and, with a fear that he could not master, saw the half-suppressed laughter of that mocking face.

"At the head o' the stairs! It's well, master, that no bad men know it, for—they might even *rob you of your gold*."

The old man did not seem to hear the last words, but they thrilled on Gilbert's ear, as his extended foot rested upon the oaken chest, in which the doubloons were concealed.

"The sands are run!"—Isaac's voice, quivering with enthusiasm, clear and ringing in its emphasis, broke on the ears of the listening hunter.

"Behold! Thus I describe the cross upon the dead man's heart!"

With the point of the knife, he laid open the flesh on the chest of the corse; the wound was in the form of a cross. A single drop of blood started from the point where the transverse gashes met.

The old man raised the phial; it glittered above his head, in the clear rays of the hanging lamp. A wild joy quivered over his face, agitating every feature, and shining brightly in his clear blue eyes.

"It is the time. The labors of a life are about to be repaid. Thus, thus, O Masters of the Divine Art, I follow your teachings—thus, O darkest and most powerful of all the Fallen Host, I obey your commands!"

His right arm shook with an unceasing tremor, as he held the phial in the light, high over his grey hairs.

The corse lay stiff and cold before him, with the figure of the Deformed, bending like an Apparition over its face; the gash in the form of a cross, glowed vividly in the light, with the solitary drop glittering like a blood-red tear.

"With this liquid—only a single drop, poured on the blood-drop in the centre of the cross—I call the Dead to Life!"

He pronounced a Hebrew word; it was that name which we call JEHOVAH.

Bending over the dead, he raised the phial in the light, and gazed intently upon its transparent liquid, his narrow chest swelling with a joy too deep for words.

"Thus——"

A sharp report was heard. It crashed on the silence, like thunder from a serene sky. Through the curtain folds, which guarded the entrance to the place, a volume of blue smoke floated, like a veil of transparent gauze.

The hand of the Wizard was still upraised, but his eye glared with all the despair of a soul forever lost.

For the hand was empty. The phial was gone. Fragments of shattered glass strewed the floor.

"The Monk of Wissahikon!"

While that blush—reddening over cheek and bosom and brow—glowed like the first pure glimpse of a new-born summer day, the Maiden raised her dark eyes, and gazed upon the form which occupied the recess, where the mirror had glistened only a moment before.

The silver cross glittering on his dark dress, he stood there, like some sad and beautiful image of Memory, the brown hair falling aside from his olive cheek, as, with head slightly bent, he turned the light of his full eyes upon the maiden's glowing face.

"I come to save you—your father's life is in danger"—the words rose to his lips, but he could not speak them.

He could only gaze upon that beautiful face, and feel the light of those brilliant eyes shining into his own.

He heard the low musical voice, but could not distinguish the words which it spoke. Only its music melted on his ear.

For the first time, the delirium of passion seized his soul; the intoxication of voluptuous madness burned in his veins.

He could not advance, he could not recede; absorbed in the loveliness which blushed before him, he stood in the recess, with his gaze centred upon the face of the young girl.

And she, with her arms half-raised, her loose robe trembling on her form, as though about to fall, could only return his gaze, and feel the fire of his eyes flashing into her soul.

The light which swung from the ceiling, tinting the dim old tapestry with mild radiance, shone clearly over the dark robe of the maiden, glowed upon the waves of her black hair, and revealed the figure of the young man, framed in the recess, and thrown into view by the darkness beyond.

At last he advanced—his senses whirling in an indescribable intoxication—he stepped from the recess, and his face, glowing through its olive hues, with the red blush of passion, appeared distinctly in the light, with the brown hair tossed aside from the forehead.

And with that step—he paused—looked upon her—and extended his arms like a man who shrinks back from the verge of a dizzy cliff.

With the loose robe waving around her form, she sank on her knees, clasped her hands, and while her lustrous eyes shone their passion into his face, she exclaimed in that voice, which melted in strange melody upon his ears—

“You have come!”

Paul started at the sight. He was entangled in some bewildering dream. He could not believe that it was a reality—that beautiful girl, kneeling at his feet, tossing her hair back from her shoulders, raising to his gaze her voluptuous face, and whispering—like a Bride who welcomes her Lover—“You have come!”

He tottered to a chair, and hid his burning forehead in his clasped hands. There was fire in his veins. His brain seemed to throb with the intensity of a new existence. His ears were filled with a lulling murmur, as though the voices of Angels had mingled with the echo of a distant waterfall.

“Paul!”

He heard the voice, but dared not raise his head. And then a hand trembled among the locks of his hair; he felt the pressure of soft, warm fingers upon his forehead.

He raised his eyes. She was there, kneeling by his side, her hair floating over her robe, her face upturned, one arm resting upon his shoulder, that soft, warm hand pressed against his brow.

And again, raising her lustrous eyes, she murmured his name——

“Paul!”

There was some strange mystery in this scene. It confused, it bewildered him. This young girl,—whose cheek flushed with passion through the intervals of her dark hair, whose large eyes grew dim with moisture beneath the fringed lids,—kneeling by his side, looking into his face, winding her arm about his neck, her fingers trembling among the brown locks about his forehead—it fired his veins with new madness.

“You know my name?” he wildly gasped.

“Yes,” she murmured, “the Voice whispered it to me.” And with that look of boundless passion, she panted at his side.

“The Voice!”

“Yes—the Voice that speaks to me in my dreams. I hear it sometimes by day, after I have prayed to God—sometimes by night, when all is still. It told me of your coming—it spoke of your Love—it bade me look for you To-Night!”



These words, uttered with a child-like faith, and yet with the tremulous accent of passion, completed the bewilderment of Paul Ardenheim.

"Do I dream?" he exclaimed—and his hand touched the forehead of the young girl—"You that are so beautiful—you, whose dark eyes fill my soul with light—you, that speak to me in tones that madden—you, whose very touch thrills me with a mad delight! You speak my name, you tell me that you looked for my coming! Oh, it is some dangerous dream—it is the work of an Evil Angel, who would peril my soul!"

And, darting from the chair, he fled affrighted from that beautiful girl.

As he stands by the window, gazing out into the wintry night—the waste of snow, silvered by the rising moon, sparkles before him—the young girl, kneeling where he left her, covers with her hands that face, now crimsoned with blushes and wet with tears.

How shall we explain the mystery of this scene?

The young girl has been reared from childhood in this isolated mansion, her friend, her instructor, her only companion, that old man, whose mind is bewildered by the Fanaticism of a Past Age. She has been exposed to no temptation; never mingled in the loves and hatreds of the great world. Like a wild flower, blushing into life on the crumbling wall of some old ruin, she has blossomed, she has bloomed in solitary loveliness.

Yet wherefore this madness of passion, this child-like tenderness, this impetuous love, with which she welcomes an unknown man, whom she beholds for *the first time*!

We may not pierce the Mystery now, nor unravel a single thread of the strange secret, and yet, as we gaze upon the scene, its peculiar beauty strikes our hearts.

Here we have a woman, blooming into the ripeness of her loveliness, and a man, whose eye indicates a strong intellect, while his form manifests the grace and vigor of young manhood.

Reared alike in these silent woods—afar from the world—their souls formed amid scenes of the same character—this young man, with the bronzed face and eyes of strange power, this young girl, so blooming with every hue of loveliness, so flowing with every line of voluptuous beauty, have met for the first time.

And yet their meeting has all the transport of a long-indulged love, all the intoxication of a Passion, which is hallowed by thoughts and memories as dear as Heaven!

The tears rained from her eyes; while her young bosom rose with a more tumultuous throb, and her face grew crimson with blushes, she started from the floor, and reached his side, with a proud and passionate step.

"It was false, then?" She touched his shoulder lightly with her hand. "You love me not. You never thought of me?"

He heard the voice, felt the hand, and a tremor shook his frame. He dared not turn his head, and gaze into her face.

"It is madness! Only a dream, from which I will soon awake!"

"And I loved you—God knows how deep, how absorbing was my love! In the daytime I thought of you, and pictured your form, and saw your face, wherever I turned my eyes! And at night, O, at night, when all was still, and the Voice broke through the silence, telling me of your love, breathing your name at every word—O, my love became mad, wild, boundless as the great sky, which gleams before us, so beautiful with its countless stars. You love me not—the Voice has spoken falsely!"

With that small hand quivering on his shoulder, its very touch thrilling a strange fire through his veins, he heard her voice, breaking in impetuous accents upon the stillness of the midnight chamber. But he could not answer. His heart was too full, his brain too crowded with conflicting emotions.

He dared not even turn to look upon her face again.

"If I look upon her I am lost!"

Lost! Lost to God and Lost to Purity, Lost to all those serene Thoughts which dwelt on the Majesty of the star-lit heavens—the tenderness of a Sister's Love—the divine beauty of sunrise and sunset—those Thoughts which ascended from a full heart, to the Great Father of all the World, and even as they arose, became Prayer.

Lost to all that was spiritual and ideal, in the mad agonies of sensual passion.

"Lady"—he said, not daring to look upon her, though he felt her panting breath on his cheek—"Forgive me, for I am like one bewildered in some intoxicating dream. I am affrighted at the beauty of your face—your touch fills my veins with an agony of delight. But there is a mist before my eyes—a sound as of voices and echoes, woven together, in my ears—my heart swells as though the hand of death was there! Forgive me, lady"—he tottered away from her extended hand—"forgive and pity! For I cannot look upon you, without *adoration*. To look into your face is to forget my God!"

O, how the roses bloomed on her cheek again, and the soft languor of passion shone in her eyes! She gazed upon his averted face, her red lips parting like a severed rose-bud, her bosom throbbing above the glittering fringe of her black robe, like a snowy wave, encircled by rays of golden light.

Then, on her white forehead, from the crescent-shaped brows to the roots of her hair, a single vein, slender and serpentine, swelled distinctly into light, and darkened, without distorting, the transparent skin.

That sinuous vein, so light as to be scarcely perceptible, seemed to indicate the resistless Will of an organization, which combined the extremes of Pride and Passion.

"You love me!" she gasped—her hand still gently laid upon his shoulder—"You love me!" And with her left arm she dashed her long hair aside from the bare shoulder.

"Love you?" echoed Paul—"There is a love which I feel when I gaze upon my sister's face. A Love as serene as the midnight stars, shining over yon waste of coldly glittering snow. But you? O, it is not love—it is not enchantment—it is not intoxication. No! It is as though you had stolen from me every impulse of my own Will; had said to me, 'Thou canst not move, save where my will permits—nor breathe, save in the light of my eyes—nor live, save by my side, and in my arms!' Love you?" his voice sunk into a whisper—"I dare not turn and gaze into your face, lest I should blaspheme my God!"

But he did turn and gaze. As though an irresistible influence swayed his every motion, he turned, and beheld her panting before him, her limbs trembling beneath the robe, while her bared arms gathered it to her passionate breast.

It seemed to him as though a golden mist floated in waves about her form, as she stood there, with those large eyes flashing amid their tears, while the dark hair, waving to her shoulders, gave an indescribable grandeur to the white forehead, seamed by that darkly swelling vein.

"You love me!" And she came toward him, with a gliding motion.

"Not love—no—no! I am mad"—

"You love me!" and her white arms were upon his shoulder.

"Pity me—pity me—for the sake of God, do not peril my soul."

"You love me!" was still her exclamation, breathed through her passionate lips, as he felt her arms around his neck, her form quivering upon his breast.

And her cheek was against his own, and over his arms and shoulders her unbound hair streamed, in waves of jetty blackness.

His brain reeled—the antique room, with its quaint wainscot, floated round him like the phantom of some unearthly dream—from head to foot, in every nerve he trembled like a dying man.

But still her arms were about his neck, still she panted on his breast, her warm bosom rising, from its sable veil, in passionate throbs, while her breath mingled with his own, as their lips trembled together.

There was a moment which seemed an Eternity to him; not an Eternity of calm rapture, but of passionate tumult, of voluptuous madness.

It was when her eyes shone their deep brightness into his own, when lip and breath were one, when, trembling in her embrace, he felt his consciousness gliding from him, in a languor that stole upon his senses, like some enchanter's spell.

Enchanter's spell! What spell like the magnetism of a first love, the sorcery of a first kiss, from lips that cling as they touch your own, and blossom into new life at the touch? what wizard-craft so maddening in its



power as the pressure of a bosom, that throbs beneath its veil, and throbs closer to your own, until your heart hears it, and echoes with an answering throb?

"You love me! The Voice was not false!" and the burden of that virgin form was in his arms, the wild beauty of that face glowed in burning blushes beneath his gaze.

"Yes—love—love beyond the power of words!" he exclaimed in broken tones, and his eyes answered her with a gaze as passionate as her own.

But even as she clung to him, he wound his hands around her wrists, he held her from him, and—while a frown gathered in sudden darkness on his brow—saw at a glance her heaving breast, her naked feet, her round, white arms. Saw the face, whose brown hues were lighted with warm vermilion on the cheek and on the lip, while the languor of dewy eyes came through the meshes of her streaming hair.

"O, beautiful—O, fairer than a dream—" he gasped, his voice sinking into a whisper, his eyes moist with passion.

At that moment a crash like thunder rung through the old mansion.

"It is a knell!" cried Paul—"The knell of my lost soul!"

As he spoke he withdrew his hands from her wrists; with the gesture of a madman, he dashed her arms from his grasp; and tottered backward, gazing vacantly into her face.

She trembled for a moment—grew pale and fell. Her long black hair, strown over the floor, with the golden fringe of her mantle glittering against the transparent whiteness of her shoulders.

She lay there like a dead woman, pale and unconscious, the blood starting from the wound upon her brow, a wound which she received, as her sudden fall dashed her head against the floor.

And yonder, hurrying from the room, mad with passion, the blood boiling like molten fire in every vein—yonder, behold Paul Ardenheim, his head bent on his breast, as he flies from the beautiful woman, as from a fiend.

He does not seek the shadow of the recess. No! Without turning his head, without one backward look, he grasps the door in the southern wall—it yields at his touch—he is in the corridor, with the light of the lamp, which shines there, glowing over his brow.

But as his foot is on the first step, even in the moment of passionate delirium, when the face, the form of the beautiful girl, floats before him in a veil of misty light, he is conscious of the presence of a far different face, a widely contrasted form.

Black David stands beside him, folding his white hands upon his breast, while his head is bowed, and his face is hidden by the uneven locks of his matted hair.

"Black David was wrong, Master Paul," he mumbles in an idiotic tone, with his great eyes wearing a vacant look—"There's never a robber

in the wizard's house. Black David heard the voices in a dream ; forgive, Master Paul, if Black David was foolish—”

No reply came from the lips of Paul. He looked in the face of the deformed man, as though he saw him not ; he dashed his hand aside, and plunged down the stairs with a madman's step.

As his face glowed into the light, ere it passed into the darkness, Black David saw it distorted by a convulsive emotion ; as his step was heard in the hall beneath, Black David also heard his incoherent cry :

“Air ! air ! The free air, and the clear sky for me—for I am in the Power of the Evil One, within these walls !”

The echo of the voice and the footstep died away, yet Black David stood at the head of the stairway, leaning his arms upon its railing, and gazing silently into the darkness beneath.

His face is turned from the light ; his hair, which, by its tangled locks, makes the outlines of his large head seem yet more massive, is tinted by the lamp, but we cannot see his features, nor mark the expression of his lips, nor read the meaning of his eyes.

And yet his form trembles—it quivers like a falling leaf—with agony ? or with laughter ?

“Isaac lies insensible on the floor beside the corse, and, even in his unconsciousness, clutches at the broken glass. The old man's hopes are blighted ; his heart broken. Paul goes from the wizard's house, flushed with agony, and shrieking for light, for air ! The wizard's gold is gone, and with it, Gilbert, the bold Huntsman. And the fair daughter,—with dark eyes and stainless bosom—who, reared by the old man from childhood, in this mansion, treasures in her virgin-soul certain vague images of the Future, certain warm imaginings of the great world beyond the glen of Wissahikon—what of the beautiful girl ? She is indeed a fair creature to look upon. So queenly her step, so impetuous her glance, so warm her lip, so beautiful the gloss of her dark hair, as it floats over shoulders white as snow ! Very beautiful, and yet the light of her eyes, their very brightness, flashing from darkness, brings to mind Catherine De Medicis, the Queen of Past Ages, who ruled France, with the Poison-Phial for a sceptre !”

Once more the form of the hunchback shook like a falling leaf, as he leaned over the railing and looked into the darkness below.

A pale face was raised from the floor, and eyes glassy and vacant in their gaze, glared in the light of the Maiden's chamber. With her forehead spotted with blood, she rose, and clutched the dark mantle to her breast, as she hurried to and fro, like one bereft of reason, now clutching her hair with an involuntary grasp, now tossing it madly aside from her face and back from her shoulders.

There was a terrible beauty in the sight. A lovely woman, with her

white forehead stained with blood, her hair dishevelled, and her robe disordered in every loosened fold, striding, with an impetuous step and flashing eye, over the floor of that silent and gloomy chamber.

"He does not love me. It was false, that Voice which whispered his name to my ear, told me to wait his coming, and yield my lip to his kiss! Not love, but scorn—ah!" She uttered a cry of terror, as the hand which she raised to her forehead was wet with blood.

"Blood, too! The mark of the hand which dashed me to the floor!"

She pressed her clasped hands over that slowly bleeding wound, and stood before the mirror, which had glided to its place again.

"I am not lovely—no, no, no! Hideous to his eyes, as I will be hideous to all other eyes! He has seen a fairer form, and loved some beautiful girl, who has not dwelt all her life alone; from very childhood, shut out from the world!"

And, tossing to and fro, her hands on her forehead, her bosom swelling under the white arms, she looked madly into the mirror, and saw the reflection of her trembling form, her lips compressed, her face pale with agony.

At this moment, while she is dumb and deathlike with the violence of her conflicting emotions, a Voice—that seems to break from the air—startles the silence of the chamber.

"You have seen him, Maiden. You have seen Paul!" there was a wild, unearthly music in that voice.

"Seen him," she answered, as though speaking to some person by her side—"Seen him, and he has dashed me at his feet, in scorn!"

"But he loves you, maiden—"

"Loves! Witness this bleeding mark upon my brow. *Love!*"

"Loves you, to madness, and will come again, and kneel at your feet, and bathe them with his tears!"

She was silent. With her fingers on her tremulous lip, she listened.

"Will seal his love with a vow in the sight of God, and lead you from this lonely valley into the great world. The unknown Maiden of the Wissahikon may become the courted and flattered Lady of some royal court, with a queenly robe upon her form, the eyes of the great, the noble, centred on her beautiful face."

Still silent. But in her eyes the tears were dried, and from her lip the tremor has passed.

"And he will triumph with you, and ascend with you the dizzy heights of rank and power. Yet, even while the praises of a world ring in his ears, and all men hasten to scatter gold and laurels in his way, his deepest joy will be thy kiss, O Maiden, his only heaven in thy embrace!"

How the full eyes shot forth a sudden light, and the warm blood glowed through the rich brown of that velvet cheek!



"He will be mine—"

"Thine! Thine only, and forever.!" said the voice—which seemed to speak at her side, from the air—and all was still.

The light shone over the chamber, glowing upon its antique furniture, glittering on the mirror, over the floor, and tinting the quaint carvings on the wall, until the oaken flowers bloom like life.

But the Maiden does not meet our eyes. Her mantle of black velvet, fringed with gold, lies neglected on the floor. Through the white curtains the moonlight steals, and mingles its rays with the faint light of the lamp, and all is silent in the Wizard's mansion.

Would you behold the passionate girl, *who*, not long ago, stood before the mirror, convulsed with the agony of a love, repulsed by scorn?

Yonder, through the dark hangings of the bed, turn your gaze, and behold a gush of light trembling over that face, sunken deep into the silken pillow, with black hair floating all around it; a face whose lids are closed, while the lips are parted, murmuring, even in slumber, some treasured name—

"Paul!"

The lantern shines over the corridor, and flings a dim ray into the darkness of the stairway. Black David is no longer here; the place is gloomy and desolate.

But there is a footstep on the narrow staircase, leading from the Wizard's tower; the small door springs open; and Isaac Van Behme appears in the light, his face deathly pale, his eyes dilating in their sockets, with the glare of apathetic despair. His slender form is still enveloped in the loose gown, and, with his head bent on his breast, he totters from the door, toward the descending stairway.

In a moment he is gone into darkness; gone without a word, his hands clenched on his breast, his white hair hanging in tangled masses over his wrinkled brow.

With a footstep that has no echo, he descends the stairs, and presently stands in the darkness of the spacious hall, on the ground floor.

He does not pause a moment, but, opening a door in the side of the staircase, he descends, without a light to show the way, into the vault beneath his mansion.

Along a dark passage he passes with that uncertain step, and in the impenetrable gloom, extends his hand; a door opens; the vaulted arch is bathed in sudden light.

He enters that chamber, or vault, which has witnessed his toil for Twenty-One Years. In that period, no footstep save Black David's and his own has crossed its threshold.

Through the gloom of that wide vault, whose stone archway is sup-

ported by four massive pillars, struggles a pale and blueish flame, which invests the whole scene with a funereal glare. That flame shines not from a hanging lamp, but through an aperture in the surface of the white altar, which rises in the centre of the space between the pillars.

It is an altar of marble, an oblong square, not more than three feet high, two in width, with a small door in one side.

That white form, rising from the stone floor, with a pale blueish light gushing from the aperture in its surface, alone breaks the stern gloom of the vault, whose massive ceiling and heavy pillars strike the soul with a sensation of vague awe.

This is the Wizard's most secret cell. There are no indications of his art, no grinning skulls, nor parchments, darkened by strange characters, nor alembics, crucibles, or other details of Astrology or Alchemy.

The pure flame, shining in a flood of tremulous light, from the top of the white altar, glowing like a spiritual presence through the gloom, alone indicates the old man's toil, his earnest search of Twenty-One Years.

He stands beside the altar, all the anguish of his blighted hope manifested in the contortions of his withered face. Silent, motionless, his thin hands clenched, and his head bowed on his breast, he gazes on the flame, and its pale light glows on his vacant eyes.

There are no words to picture the despair of that old man's heart. The brown sailor, gazing on the wreck of that ship which has been his home, in calm and storm, for half a century; the renowned general, suddenly disgraced into a prisoner, and standing amid the bodies of his mangled comrades; the father looking into the dead eyes of a beloved daughter—these all are subdued by agony that is too deep for utterance or tears. But the despair of the Alchemist was deeper than all these woes, though linked in one convulsive throb.

He beheld not the wreck of a home, or the slaughter of an army, or the solitary death of a daughter, at once beloved and beautiful, but an Immortal Life—almost achieved—was swept into nothingness, even as he palpitated on its threshold.

The Thought of a life was dead. Shattered with the brittle phial, which had broken in his grasp, and sprinkled the floor with the priceless liquid of Eternal Youth.

While thus he stood, absorbed in his despair, his blue eyes glowing in the light of the flame, there came to his soul a thought as sudden as it was blasphemous.

He drew from the folds of his dress a packet, which he extended over the flame. A stream of sand, or white dust, descended from the packet, into the aperture. And as it fell, a luminous smoke began to wind in feathery columns over the altar, and float through the gloom, in waves of rolling mist.

It wound over the old man's white hairs, encircled his form, and ere an

instant had passed, filled the dreary vault with a cloud of perfumed vapor.

From the bosom of that cloud his voice was heard :

"Even as the seers of the old wisdom, bewildered by the clouds of their physical existence, sought to gain communion with the Spirits of the Invisible World, though at the peril of their deathless souls, so do I, in the name of the Seven Fallen Angels,—who once stood by the Throne of Eternity, bathing their wings in the light that never dies—invoke the darkest and most powerful of the Seven ! Behold ! The Cross is beneath my feet—I pray no longer to—" he muttered the awful and incommunicable Name—"but to ASHTAROTH, the Prince of the Fallen !"

With these words were murmured the mystic formula of the ancient Cabalists—those Prophets of the far-gone ages, who derived their inspiration alike from Good and Evil, from God and Satan—and as the voice of the old man echoed, clear and deep, through the vault, the smoke-clouds swept aside from his face, and showed the dauntless Will, written on the brow, and burning in the eyes.

There was a pause, and, stricken with sudden terror, he fell on his knees, as though a strong arm had dashed him to the floor.

"I am here," answered a sad, low-toned voice.

Before the altar, encircled by clouds of undulating mist, appeared a face of wild, unearthly beauty. The pale features, invested with a lurid light, were seen amid a mass of dark hair, waving in snake-like locks, and with a red glow glimmering through its intervals. The eyes were large and dazzling in their unchanging brightness. The lips wore a smile of undefinable meaning ; now it was tenderness, and now scorn. The forehead was wide and lofty, growing wider as it arose, in an outline of swelling boldness ; the skin was white as a corse.

That FACE, seen amid the clouds which floated to and fro, seemed like the face of a dead man, with an unnatural life just flashing into its eyes.

There was a mark upon the forehead ; a livid cross, which blackened in hideous distinctness on the death-like brow.

"Thou hast invoked the most powerful of the Seven. Ashtaroth is here ! Poor child of clay, what wouldest thou ask ?"

"It is gone—the fruit of my life-long toil—" shrieked Isaac, wringing his hands, as he grovelled on the floor, the cold dew starting from his brow—"I obeyed thy commands. For twenty-one years, night and day, without ceasing, the fire burned within this altar, and this very night, I was about to place the Water of Life—the result of all my toil—on the breast of the dead, when the phial crumbled in my grasp, and—my toil is in vain ! I have become old for naught—in vain this brain racked by the agony of eternal fever—in vain this withered form, in vain these wrinkles, which have gathered while my task wore on—in vain these grey hairs, which only tell how near that Grave, without a hope !"



"The Water of Eternal Youth, for which thou didst seek, in the long dream of a life-time, has been wasted by thee—wasted as the dead was about to feel its influence?"

"Not wasted! No! By the despair which I feel—no! An unseen hand dashed the phial from my grasp—"

"And for that priceless liquid—wasted in a moment—thou didst labor twenty-one years, every year a century; the whole circle of years, an Eternity!"

"Dark Angel, it is not for you to taunt me with my ruin. Your hand may have done this deed——"

"It was my deed. I saw that thou wert not yet worthy of the unutterable boon. Another trial is demanded, ere thou wilt be worthy of the Forbidden Fruit, which the First Man and Woman sought to grasp."

"Twenty-one years! Look at these grey hairs! Ere twenty-one hours are past, I will be dead. Dead! And the **HEREAFTER**——"

"Thou shalt not die. Nor is a trial of a life-time asked of thee. No intense study, no brain-cankering toil—no anxious watch by night, and maddening thoughts by day! Before the rising of another sun thou mayst raise the Dead, and from his lips gain the knowledge of the great secret, which transmutes all base metals into Gold."

"Speak—Ashtaro—**and I will worship thee!**"

"Within this altar, warmed by the fire that never dies, still is concealed the Sacred Urn!"

"It is there now as it has been for twenty-one years. Within its bosom, I created the Water of Eternal Youth."

"Pour into that Urn a single drop of blood, warm from the heart of a tempted but still stainless maiden, and the Water of Eternal Youth once more will greet your eyes. It must be taken from a heart that throbs with the last pang of life—from a heart that quivers with the last impulse of the soul, fluttering ere it takes its flight."

"But this is too horrible—it demands a Murder. A crime——"

"Dost thou talk of crime? What crime hast thou not committed? Is it for thee to hesitate?"

"Crime! Have I been unkind, even in thought, to my only child? Has my hand ever been closed at the call of suffering, the prayer of houseless misery? Of what crime do you accuse me——"

"It is not for me to accuse. But woe to thee, sad and mistaken man, woe to thee, when the Hour of Judgment comes! The crime of all crimes will be laid to thy soul, the blasphemy of daring to be Immortal! The Unpardonable Sin is on thy head: it will weigh thee down, in the fathomless anguish of an Eternity of Crime!"

"A single drop of blood, warm from the heart of a tempted but still stainless maiden, and lo! the Water of Life is mine. Mine the secret of boundless gold."

"Thine before the dawn of another day ! Listen ! Even at this moment a pure virgin struggles in the Tempter's arms ! Hasten, ere she is a tainted and dishonored thing, hasten to her side, and from her form, throbbing with the last pulse of life, snatch the priceless boon !"

"I obey ! I obey !"

Then, in a low whisper, that pale face, seen dimly among misty clouds, half-luminous and transparent, murmured the syllables of an unknown tongue. While his face was distorted and his form cramped by the violence of preter natural emotions, Isaac Van Behme bent his head on his breast, and, from the shadows of his woven brow, gazed into the lurid visage of the Unknown.

Those words, spoken in the mysterious tongue of the Cabalists and Magi of the ancient ages, thrilled on the listener's ear. He heard them with a shudder, and then a dark cloud rushed upon the scene, and Isaac fell forward on his face, unconscious and motionless as a dead man.

When he again unclosed his eyes, the pure spiritual light shone calmly through the aperture in the summit of the altar, and glowed upon the massive pillars, the gloomy arch, the floor of solid stone. But the mist had rolled away, and with it, the Unknown Face had passed into nothingness.

"The maiden," he murmured, as a cold shudder shook his stiffened limbs, "The maiden whom I met to-night by the forest fire, weeping over the dead body of Yoconok !"

He hurried from the vault. The door closed behind him, with a sudden jar. Along the dark passage, with unsteady steps he hastened, and, ascending the stairway, soon reached the hall on the ground floor, with the light shining feebly from the second story, over its gloom.

As he hurried to the door, he missed his footing, and stumbled over a dark form, which lay crouching near the stairway.

"It is but the poor brainless hunchback !" he exclaimed—"Sleeping beside the door, too ! A faithful knave !"

And, stepping gently over Black David's form, he opened the door, and passed forth into the clear, cold moonlight.

No sooner had his footsteps died on the air, than the Deformed started to his feet, and hurried up the stairs.

Softly, on tiptoe, and with a gliding footstep, he approached the door of the Maiden's chamber, and bent his head close to the dark panels. There was no sound ; she slept on her virgin bed, with her face sunken in the silken pillows. Black David opened the door without a word, and passed the threshold of that sacred retreat.

The lamp, swinging from the ceiling, invested the place with a soft, luxurious, dreamy light.

With the same noiseless step, the hunchback approached the bed, and

winding the tapestry about his uncouth form, looked within, his face glowing on one cheek with the dim light.

It was a strong contrast. That pale face, with the tangled hair floating from its huge forehead in uneven locks, down to the matted beard; and the glowing countenance of the slumbering girl, who rested her cheek upon her bent arm, while the dark fringes of her closed lids, and the warm beauty of her parting lips, gave a new loveliness to her olive complexion, as her black hair wandered in unbound tresses over the silken pillow.

And, like some Demon, watching, with flaming eyes and livid lip, curving in scorn, the slumber of an Angel, Black David stood in the folds of the faded hangings, and looked upon the sleeping girl.

"She is very beautiful, and in her dreamy sleep, she murmurs the name of her lover. Who could not predict her future? All that is tender, all that is loving, all that is virgin in voluptuous beauty, centres in her face, and marks each outline of her form. Yet hold—upon her brow, from the eyes to the roots of her hair, a slender vein—almost imperceptible—swells from the clear skin, and quivers like a serpent there! So,—it was many hundred years ago—upon the brow of woman, as fair and beautiful, a similar dark vein swelled through the stainless skin. What was HER fate?—It seems but yesterday; the ages roll back like a curtain, and lay bare that terrible *Memory*. What shall be the Fate of this sleeping girl? Through the clouds of the Future I behold it, and see the serpent, which now darkens on her forehead, glide into her heart, and drop its venom from her rosy lips!

"It is enough to force a smile, the folly of these cowed Mummers, who picture the Enemy of Mankind in a grotesque shape—ha! ha!—with hoof and horns, and all the details of a puerile fancy.

"No one could be deceived by a Devil so pitiable as that—not even the Priests who paint him thus!

"But a Devil that comes panting on your senses from a white bosom; that kisses you with warm, voluptuous lips; that fires you with the brightness of eyes languid with passion; a beautiful Devil altogether, who wears, on her fair brow, a single black and serpent-like vein—

"Fear Satan at all times, brave Paul of Ardenheim, but kneel to God, and pray for mercy, when he comes to you in a shape like this!"

While the crazed hunchback uttered these incoherent words, in his low, melodious voice, the young girl, in her slumber, clasped her white arms over her bosom, and murmured, in a voice languid with passionate desire—

"Mine, and mine only!"



## CHAPTER EIGHTH.

B. H. A. C.

ON a rock, beside the Wissahikon shore, where, in the summer-time, it glides on without a ripple, wider and deeper in its tranquil flow, as it nears the Schuylkill, stood Gilbert, the Hunter, bending upon his rifle, with his eyes cast upon the waves, which looked black and dreary, as they swept onward, amid white masses of ice, glittering in the rising moon.

It was sailing there, in the pure winter sky, its cold light shining over a broad hill, which sank to the shore, mantled with frozen snow, and sparkling like a sheet of undulating silver, as the dark forests girdled it on every side.

This hill rose before him to the south, ascending from the ice-cumbered Wissahikon to the dreary woods, over whose leafless branches shone the transparent sky.

Behind him was a wall of brushwood, and a precipitous mass of forest trees, which towered suddenly into the heavens, with the forms of gigantic rocks thrust here and there from the dark branches.

And from the gloom in the east, the Wissahikon comes glittering as she flows by the snow-mantled hills ; and into the gloom in the west she passes as suddenly, her echo breaking in a low, monotonous murmur, far along the woods—redoubled by the craggy rocks—and rising, in softened music, into the sky.

There is a ray gleaming from the pine trees on the southern hill ; it is the light from the Wizard's tower.

From the gloom at the hunter's back—he stands facing the south,—an answering ray trembles forth, and dies upon the waters. It is the light stealing from the closed shutters of the deserted house.

O, it is beautiful to stand thus alone, at dead of night, on the Wissahikon shore ; beneath your feet a rock which, thousands of years ago, was lightly pressed by the footsteps of some dark-cheeked Indian maid, or swept by the white robes of the Sacrificial Priest, who raised his hands to yonder sky, to yonder moon, and, in the deep silence of a midnight universe, uttered a Prayer to God, in a tongue, now lost in the chaos of the centuries.

It is beautiful, in the summer-time, when the broad hill wears a garment of tufted grass, and the world of foliage bends its leaves and blossoms into the calm waters, while the distant cry of a night-bird mingles with the unceasing chirp of the katy-did, and the soft voice of Wissahikon.

But now, in Winter, and at midnight too, when the breathless stillness—deepened rather than broken by the monotonous murmur of the waves dashing against the ice—awes every throb of your heart into a solemnity which is Religion, while the eye beholds only that great vault of transparent azure, arching over the leafless woods, with the moon gliding away in cloudless light, and flinging a blessing on your forehead as she glides—it is in winter, at midnight, that the glen of Wissahikon is a holy place, to which the Angels might come as to a temple, and breathe their pity for the Crimes of Man, and raise their hymns of thankfulness to God.

Are you sick of the World? Do the crimes of the Great City wear like an iron fang into your soul? Does the great panorama of wealth, that is drunken with its boundless sensuality, and Poverty, that is ferocious with its sullen endurance, seem to your heart but a curse to Man, a blasphemy to God?

Then, from the crowded streets of the Great City, come forth. Come, from that clouded atmosphere, in whose foul bosom, the Plagues of Moral Death swelter into hideous birth,—come, and forget the world; forget the anguish, the blood and tears of Man the Slave, and be full of Peace, though but for an hour, by the Wissahikon Waters.

For, by the Wissahikon, at dead of Night, when there is snow upon the ground, and ice upon the waves, and a clear moon in a cloudless sky, you grow nearer to your God, and feel your heart reach out its arms to grasp Eternity.

Then, filled with Peace that is unutterable, you even forget that there is, in all the world, such a libel on the Universe as a Man, ground into dust by the footstep of a Brother—

But hold; they tell me that I talk too much of suffering man, and crowd my pages too full of his dumb anguish. Talk all night, if it please you, of still waters and serene skies,—they say it—but never tell us that there are Banks and Churches for the Rich, and only Graves and Gibbets for the Poor.

Pardon me, my friends. Be merciful to me, O silken People. For what I speak, I have learned in a bitter school. The world has not been a very soft road, sprinkled with roses, to my feet. Will you forgive me, if, now and then, I dare to fling back into my Teacher's face, the iron lesson which it taught to me? And when the flint of the rough road cuts my feet, will you sneer very bitterly, if I but dare to moan?

For myself, I will be silent. Not a word of orphanage, and wrongs inflicted by godly hands; not a whisper.

But the wrongs of those who have suffered like me, and endured a thousand pangs, where I felt one,—the anguish of those who suffer now, and go, dragging their weary feet, to miserable graves—shall they be voiceless too?

No. Not while the good God gives to me the strength to grasp this

friend of mine—this well-worn pen, which has cut a way even through the granite wall of poverty and orphanage—no ! Not while the Father of the Fatherless, the Redeemer of the Poor, permits one throb to pulsate at my heart, one word to quiver from my tongue.

For I am ambitious. Ambitious with a wild, insane ambition. When I am dead, I want one flower to bloom upon my grave ; that flower planted by the hand of some Poor Man, who can bless my ashes with a word like this——

“ Here moulders the hand that dared to write one brave word in the name of Man.”

In my crude way of thinking, there is something more beautiful in that solitary flower, planted by a Poor Man’s hand, than in a marble monument, built by a King, in Westminster Abbey, over some dead Conqueror, whose hallowed epitaph bears words like these——

*“He slew, in a hundred battles, at least one hundred thousand of his Brothers.”*

But this midnight scene of Wissahikon, hallowed by this stainless snow and moonlit sky, has won me from the thread of my history.

Leaning on his rifle, Gilbert, the Hunter, gazed sadly into the dark waters. The moonlight, glowing on his face, revealed the look of tender sadness which, for a moment, softened its hardy features. He stood on the rock, which jutted from the bank ; one foot resting on its hard surface, the other on a square box, secured by a brass padlock, and bound with intricate cords. Beneath the lid of that box, the wealth, or rather a wreck of the Wizard’s wealth, was hidden.

“ There’s a turnin’ pint in every man’s life,” muttered Gilbert, with his eyes fixed on the waves—“ And jist as that ar’ twig quivers in the eddy, near that chunk of ice, as if unsartin which way to go, so my life quivered this night.”

Associating his own destiny with the fate of the withered twig, which trembled in the eddy created by the waves dashing against a block of ice, in the middle of the stream, Gilbert watched its course with involuntary interest.

“ It trimbles tow’rd the channel on the left, where the eddy grows into a little whirlpool—so ! By —— ! It turns to the right ; it swims along the quiet channel, it——curses on it ! It goes to the left, after all—it tosses in the whirlpool—there, it is safe !”

The hunter’s face glowed with unfeigned pleasure, his breast heaved with a deep respiration.

“ That ’ill be the way with my life. Quiverin’ for a moment, unsartin which channel to take, and tossin’ on the waves, only to go safely onward, after all. But no ! By —— ! the twig snaps in pieces, and scatters on the waters, in broken fragments !”



Do not smile, when you see the cold dew standing in beaded drops from his forehead. For by a superstition, common to the humblest and most exalted natures, he had associated the Future of his own life, with the course of some trifling thing, and taken the fate of the twig as a Prophecy of his destiny.

"So it 'ill be with me! Tossed on the waves only to be bruk to pieces! Well—well! If I had married Mad'lin' all would have been right, but now"——

An expression darkened over his brown face, which distorted every bold line, tightened the lips, and drew the brows over the flashing eyes.

"Now!"

He raised his rifle to his shoulder, and took deliberate aim, as though a mortal enemy was standing on the opposite shore.

"That's what my life 'ill be——" the rifle dropped by his side again—"A bullet for every man who has gold, which I would like to have; a bullet or a knife, a shot or a stab! And Mad'lin' might ha' turned the wild life of one like me, into somethin' quiet and full of Peace. But it is past, and I must go where I am led."

Turning from the rock, with the box under one arm, and his good rifle on his shoulder, Gilbert entered the shadows of the brushwood, and pursued the windings of a foot-path, which led far into the gloom of the dense forest, now passing through some open space, silvered by moonlight, and again lost in the maze of giant trees.

At last, emerging from a thicket of briars and brushwood, interwoven in one almost impassable wall, Gilbert beheld the old house, deep sunken in the glen between two high hills.

It was a two-storied structure, built of dark grey stone, with four windows on its front, whose shutters were closed. Before the door, on whose dingy panels the moon shone brightly, a huge stone, worn smooth by the pressure of many feet, supplied the place of a step. Around it the prospect was wild and desolate. The stony ground was covered with withered brushwood, even to the walls, and the front of the edifice alone was visible, in that wilderness of giant trees.

The evergreen pine stretched its branches over the roof, mingled with the leafless limbs of the chesnut and the oak. The scyamore, with its white trunk, glared out in the light of the moon from the darkness of the woods. Behind the deserted mansion, the hill rose suddenly, its summit seen through the trees above the chimney, which sent a volume of smoke into the sky.

Altogether, that house, rude and monotonous in its architecture, presented a sight of some interest, from its very desolation, and its peculiar position, in the hollow of the glen, encircled on every side by the great trees of the forest, with brushwood spreading darkly between their trunks.

Gilbert advanced through the space in front of the edifice, where the moonlight shone in clear radiance. On the stone before the door, he paused for a moment, inclining his head toward the panels. All was still, yet a confused sound, like the songs and shouts of a revel, drowned by thick walls, came ever and again at sudden intervals to his ear.

"The folks of Wisseyhik'n little dream what kind o' ghosts haunt this here old house!" he said, with a smile upon his sunburnt face.

Then, with his hand clenched, he knocked thrice upon the door, and heard the echoes dying away within, as through the arches of a corridor.

The door was opened, and Gilbert passed the threshold, and heard the hinges grate, as the door was suddenly closed behind him. He stood in utter darkness; not a ray of light shone into the intense night of the place.

"The word?" said a rough voice.

"*Death!*" answered Gilbert, in his accustomed tone.

"What would you here?"

"I would enter the Lodge of the B. H. A. C.," replied the Hunter.

"If you are a true B. H. A. C., you will know the way. Advance and give the explanation to the Word!"

Through the midnight gloom, Gilbert advanced, counting his measured footsteps. When he had measured ten paces from the door, he extended his hand, and felt the panels of another door. He knocked four times, each knock rising above the other, and a circle of light shone through the darkness. It was a warm light, shining through a circular aperture in the door, and flinging a faint glow over the place in which he stood.

By that uncertain light, it might be ascertained that he had entered a small apartment, the monotony of whose bare walls, and uncovered floor, was only broken by a dimly-defined figure near Gilbert's side.

The Hunter applied his lips to the circular aperture in the door, and whispered these words:

"— *to the Rich!*"

As he spoke, the door opened, and in a moment, Gilbert stood in a cell-like room, lighted by a lamp which hung from the ceiling, and revealed the dark hangings, the floor strown with sand. A single chair stood near the door, and leaning on its high back, a veiled figure appeared, shrouded from head to foot in a dark robe, with a cowl drooping over the face. On that part of the cowl which concealed the face, two letters were inscribed in golden embroidery—"B. H. A. C."

"Your name?" a deep voice exclaimed, speaking from the folds of the monkish cowl.

"Gilbert Morgan, a Brother of the Rifle Lodge, Number 256, of the B. H. A. C."

"Give the Word and its explanation, so that I may know you for a Brother."

*"Death—to the Rich!"*

"It is well. Clothe yourself with appropriate Regalia, and work your way into the Lodge. The door is before you."

Placing his rifle on the floor, and with it the box, containing the Wizard's gold, Gilbert lifted the dark curtain which concealed the walls, and took from a recess, or closet, a collar of scarlet velvet, edged with gold lace, and with a dagger emblazoned on one side, a skull and cross-bones on the other.

He placed it around his neck, and then took from the closet an apron of the same material, also edged with gold, but with the letters, B. H. A. C., embroidered in the centre. He secured it round his waist by a cord, ending in a tassel of gold, and thus arrayed in the Regalia of the Order, advanced toward a door, whose narrow panels appeared among the sombre hangings of the room. The box was under his left arm, the rifle on his shoulder, as he knocked five times, with a pause between each sound.

"Who comes there?" a voice was heard speaking through a square aperture in the centre of the door.

"A Brother of the Knightly Degree," answered Gilbert, in the tone of one who repeats some carefully remembered formula.

"The word of the Knightly Degree?"

"Life"—answered Gilbert.

"To whom?"

"— To the Poor!"

"Enter, Brother Knight of the B. H. A. C.," exclaimed the voice, which was heard through the circular aperture in the door.

And ere a moment had passed, Gilbert, passing the door, which closed after him, found himself encircled by the details of a scene of peculiar interest.

It was a large room, with a lofty ceiling, and a dim light quivering in mid air. The high walls were hung with dark cloth, on which was emblazoned various letters and symbols, some of the most grotesque, others of the most impressive character.

At the eastern end of the room, rose a platform, attainable by three wide steps, covered with dark cloth. On this platform was placed a chair or throne, in which was seated a man of muscular form, attired in almost regal splendor. There was a glittering crown upon his forehead—a scarlet robe upon his form, drooping from his shoulders to his feet, in luxurious folds—and on his breast a collar of dark purple velvet, emblazoned on one side with the dagger, on the other with the skull and cross-bones. The black veil which concealed his face bore the golden letters, B. H. A. C.

This was the Worthy Master of the Rifle Lodge, No. 256, of the B.



H. A. C. His purple collar indicated the Right Venerable or Priestly degree.

Opposite this platform, in the western extremity of the Lodge, was a smaller platform, rising two steps above the floor, with an oaken chair upon its summit. Here was seated a figure, veiled in a light-blue robe, with a scarlet collar, gleaming with emblems, on his breast, and a coronal of silver leaves entwined about his brow. His face, covered by a veil of black cloth, with spaces for the eyes, also bore the letters, B. H. A. C.

This was the Honorable Warden of the Lodge, clad in the regalia of the Venerable or Knightly Degree.

And between the Warden and the Master, were seated some hundred men, every face covered with a veil, every form bearing the regalia of the order, either the white scarf of an Initiate, or the scarlet collar of a Knight, or the purple insignia of a Priest. In the dim light, the effect of this scene was at once solemn and dazzling.

The floor was of dark wood, polished like a mirror. In its centre, appeared a large star, inserted in the polished wood, and glittering like burnished gold.

To this star Gilbert advanced, and placed the box and the rifle at his feet. Then, raising his clasped hands above his head, he bowed before the Worthy Master, who slowly imitated the gesture, after which Gilbert spread forth his arms, with the fingers of each hand extended and separate from each other.

"Right, Brother!" a voice sounded from beneath the Master's veil.

The Hunter, turning on his heel, faced the Worthy Warden, and saluted him with the same sign.

Then, lifting the box and the rifle from the floor, he took his seat among the veiled brethren, covering his face with a veil similar to the others, which was extended to him by a figure clad in a shapeless black robe, with a dark plume waving from his shrouded forehead. This was the Worthy Herald of the Lodge.

"Let the rite of Initiation begin!" said the Worthy Master, in a hollow voice, which, evidently assumed, echoed through the spacious room, with a strange and unnatural emphasis.

And from the dark hangings near the Warden's Platform, the Herald, clad in black, with the plume waving over his veiled face, led forth a half-naked man, whose eyes were covered by a white scarf, bound tightly around the brows. His form, bare to the waist, was marked by a broad chest, and arms of iron muscle. And yet, as, with his eyes blindfolded, he followed the Herald, he trembled like a man seized with an ague-chill. It could not have been with cold, for, either from the heat of a fire which was invisible, or from the numbers gathered in the darkened room, the air was hot and stifling.

Not a word was spoken for the space of ten minutes, but in that space,

the senses of the Candidate were completely bewildered. He was led to and fro, now crossing the room, now traversing its entire length, now suddenly turned in his course, and forced on his knees, by the hands of the Herald.

It was plainly to be seen, that the dead silence of the place awed the senses of this strong man, while the manner in which the Herald led him, gave him the idea of traversing winding corridors, long passages, and a wide range of rooms. For as, in his blindfolded career, he approached the eastern or western extremities of the Lodge, the doors appearing amid the hangings were opened and closed, with a harsh, grating sound. And every time he passed the golden star, glittering from the centre of the floor, a figure robed in white advanced from the crowd of brethren, and waved a burning flambeau in his face.

This impressed him with the idea of a fire, blazing in his path, and about to envelop him with its flames.

Indeed, the silent ceremonial, altogether, was calculated to chill with awe the firmest nerves; to weaken, with the rapid alternations of suspense and fear, the stoutest heart. The ten minutes—which seemed an eternity to the blindfolded man—were over at last. A deep bell, striking one, and echoing like a knell, broke on his ear.

“Thou art here, in the hallowed circle of the Free Lodge of the B. H. A. C.,” said the Herald, in a guttural tone.

Then chains were dashed upon the floor, and clanked at his back. The harsh sound, breaking, in sudden violence, from the dead stillness, seemed to complete the terror of the Initiate. His bared arms trembled; his knees quivered, and shook against each other.

“Do not—do not—” he gasped—“I will obey—”

Still, no voice was heard in answer; an unbroken silence prevailed.

While the Herald bound the chains about his bared chest, and twined their cold links around his naked arms, four figures clad in white, with torches in their hands, bore from the shadows a bier, on which was placed a motionless figure, in a sitting posture, with two hands extended from the black pall which covered its outlines.

“It is the body of the Dead!” whispered the Herald—“It is beside thee, on its bier. Its face is covered by a pall, but the cold, stiff hands are extended, to clasp thee in the embrace of Death. Art thou ready for the trial?”

And as he spoke, a chorus of hollow whispers echoed in the ear of the Candidate—“It is the corse of one who betrayed his trust”—“He died in the act of crime”—“The vengeance of the Lodge overtook him at the altar, even as he heard the voice of his Bride”—

“The trial?” faltered the Candidate.

“Yes, the solemn ordeal of the dead hand!” spoke the Herald in his hollow voice. “Give me thy hand. Press the hand of the dead—thus—”

The Initiate shook like a reed, as he felt those cold fingers in his grasp.

“Clasp it firmly, and repeat with me the obligation of a Free Brother of the B. H. A. C. *‘If in my heart there is hidden one thought of treachery to the Order, in whose Lodge I stand, may my hand become like the hand which I grasp; and in witness of this my vow, I raise to my lips the cold hand of the Dead.’*”

The Candidate faltered the words, with a pause between each syllable, as though his fears had choked his utterance.

“Raise the hand to your lips”—spoke the deep voice in his ear.

With his strong arm trembling in every nerve, he slowly lifted the dead hand, and felt its fingers grow colder in his grasp. He pressed it to his lips, and as the moist, clammy skin filled him with a sensation of intolerable loathing, he let it fall, as though it was a hand of red-hot iron.

“Examine the hand, Honorable Herald”—spoke the Worthy Master from his throne—“If there is a drop of blood upon the palm, this Candidate will prove a Traitor!”

A dead silence ensued. The Initiate, shuddering with suspense, awaited the result of this strange ordeal.

“There is!” shouted the Herald in tones of thunder—“There is a drop of blood upon this dead hand.”

“Then,” exclaimed the Master, starting erect on his platform, with his regalia glittering in the dim light—“Then have we a Traitor in our midst. Brothers, arise—arise with daggers drawn, and hurl the wretch to his doom!”

A confused sound, as of trampling feet, and rustling robes, and sharp steel, clanking from the sheath, crashed on the Initiate’s ear.

His knees sank beneath him; prostrate on the floor, with the bandage still over his eyes, he faltered the incoherent prayer—

“Mercy! No Traitor, but a true man—do not!”

He felt the points of the drawn daggers touch his face, his breast, his arms. He was encircled by a wall of deadly steel.

“Death to the Traitor—death!” arose from an hundred voices. “He will betray us—he must not leave the Lodge alive—the drop of blood on the hand of the dead, bears witness against him!”

Then a voice, deeper and bolder than all the others, was heard through the uproar:

“Prepare, Brothers, prepare your daggers! When I raise my hand, plunge them, one and all, and at the same moment, into the body of the Traitor!”

There was a pause. A breathless silence reigned. The Initiate moved his lips, but he could not speak. His head sunk upon his breast, and his arms fell motionless in their chains.

At this moment, a whisper disturbed the breathless stillness—



"Shall we spare him? He may repent! Even yet, Brothers, he may be true!"

And in answer other whispers arose—

"No! we cannot spare him. He is doomed. Look! The Worthy Master is about to lift his hand!"

A picture of terror more abject cannot be imagined, than was presented in the prostrate figure of that strong man, bound in chains, and surrounded by the crowd of veiled forms, flashing with regalia, a dagger glittering in each uplifted hand.

The light suspended from the ceiling grew fainter, and a gloom more impressive than intense darkness, sank on the scene, confounding the forms of the brethren, in one vague mass of half-shadow, from which—like flame-sparks from a cloud—their regalia glittered in tremulous points of radiance.

"What wouldst thou do, to obtain light and liberty?" said a voice—it was the disguised voice of the Herald.

The Initiate could not answer.

"Let the bandage be removed from his eyes. He shall behold the doom that awaits him."

There was a mingled sound as of whispering voices and steps hurrying to and fro, with the sharp clang of steel encountering steel, heard through the confusion.

The Initiate felt the bandage drop from his eyes. It was a moment before he could recover the use of his sight, but when he gazed around, he discovered that he was kneeling in the centre of a room not more than ten feet square, with a lofty ceiling, and hangings of midnight darkness.

Before him stood a man, enveloped in a shapeless garment of coarse cloth, grey in color, and with a veil of black crape over his face. In one hand he held a glittering axe, in the other a flaming torch, whose red light imparted a lurid glare to the terror-stricken face of the Initiate. Beside this figure was an elevation, covered with black velvet. It was the block of the scaffold.

"I am thy executioner!" said the figure—"Advance and lay thy head upon the block!"

The face of the Initiate, changed from its ruddy hues, to a corpse-like pallor, was agitated in every nerve. He raised his chained hands, and gasped—

"I am no Traitor!"

"Come! The moment of your death is here. Hark! That bell; you hear it? It is your funeral knell."

He tottered to his feet, entirely awed by the terrors which he had endured. With one step he reached the block, and knelt and laid his head upon it. He saw the axe flash in the air, in the red light of the torch—

He closed his eyes.

There was a pause. The axe did not fall. Tremblingly the Initiate unclosed his eyes, and felt them blinded by a dazzling light.

The four curtains, which, descending from the ceiling of the Lodge, had formed the cell-like apartment, were rolled aside, and the sight which met the eyes of the affrighted man, was brilliant beyond the power of language.

An hundred torches, each grasped in the arm of a Brother of the Order, lighted up the spacious Lodge room, and shone on the stars and jewels,—the symbols and robes—in one vivid flood of brightness.

High on his platform, his breast heaving under its purple collar, appeared the Worthy Master, with lines of veiled forms, extending from his side, down the steps of the platform, to the floor; and in every hand a torch blazed brightly, and on every neck the gorgeous regalia glittered with blinding radiance.

“Arise! Advance! We hail you as a Brother!” exclaimed the Worthy Master, in a loud and ringing voice.

Trembling still, the Initiate rose; the chains fell from his breast and arms; guided by the Herald’s hand, he approached the Master’s platform.

And from his pale face the sweat started even yet in beaded drops.

He glanced from side to side, on the array of veiled figures, clad in robes of linen and purple, and decked with symbols that shone like stars, and then his eye was centred on the Master’s form, who stood motionless upon his platform, with a golden torch held in his extended arm.

“Thou hast passed the first ordeal. Another yet remains. Yet, ere we try thy courage, and test thy faith, with the Ordeal of Blood, I have a charge to impress upon thy soul.”

The Initiate beheld a Brother clad in white advance, holding in one hand, a coarse garment, flaming red in hue, and in the other, a knife, rusty and dim, as with the stain of blood.

“Endue the Candidate with the Blood-red robe. Place in his hand the rusted knife.”

It was done. With the coarse garment on his broad chest, and the knife in his hand, the Initiate awaited the commands of the Worthy Master.

“Canst thou tell, O Candidate, whose blood it is, that dyes the sackcloth which now covers your form?”

The Initiate’s grey eyes expanded in wonder.

“I cannot tell!” he faltered.

“It is the Blood of the Poor,” exclaimed the Master.

From a hundred voices broke the chorus:

“The sackcloth bears witness of the Wrongs of the Poor, slain for ages by the axe, by the cord, by the iron hand of the Tyrant!”

"The dagger in thy hand is dimmed by a dusky stain. Whose blood is it, that gathers in blackness on its sharp point?"

"I cannot tell—"

"It is the blood of the Oppressor," said the Master; and again the voice of the Brothers joined in chorus:

"The Blood of the Tyrant! Sacred, in the sight of God, be the steel which is crimsoned by that blood!"

"This sackcloth, stained with the blood of the Poor, this dagger, rusted by the blood of the Tyrant's heart, have for thee a solemn lesson. That lesson marks thy first step into the mysteries of our Order. Listen! So long as the blood of the Poor dyes the sackcloth, so long will the blood of the Tyrant stain the dagger. The day comes, when the sackcloth shall be changed into a garment spotless as the snow, when the dagger shall be transformed into a Cross of dazzling light. Then shall the blood of the Poor no longer flow, then shall the earth be no longer polluted by the Tyrant's step. But until that day comes, we have joined in solemn covenant; wilt thou take the Oath of that covenant, and bind its motto to thy heart?"

"I will!"

"Warden, administer the Oath."

The Candidate, attired in the bloody sackcloth, with the rusted knife in his hand, was led along the floor, through the dazzling array of the crowded Lodge. In a few moments he stood at the western extremity of the room, at the foot of the Warden's platform.

The Warden, gorgeous in his light-blue robe, varied by the scarlet collar, and with a group of white plumes tossing about his veiled brow, descended the steps, holding in his hand a goblet, filled to the brim with a red liquid.

"Kneel, and repeat the oath! I do swear, in the name of \* \* \* , to obey forever the mandate of my superiors; to keep locked in my bosom the secrets of this order; to yield them up, neither to the fear of man, the love of woman, nor yet the terrors of the grave. I also swear \* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \* Furthermore, in case I prove recreant to my oath, and refuse to obey the commands of my superiors, or reveal the secrets of the B. H. A. C., or meet with any Lodge, not chartered by the Grand Lodge of this order, may the dagger of the first brother whom I encounter be planted in my heart; may the sun refuse me warmth, water fail to quench my thirst, and earth deny me the shelter of a grave."

"So mote it be! Amen and Amen!"

"And in witness of this oath, and of this invocation, I place to my lips this goblet, filled with the blood of a Brother who betrayed his trust. So may my blood be drunken, in case I imitate the perjury of the Traitor!"

He did not refuse the goblet nor fail to utter the words. With a frenzied gesture, he raised it, and moistened his lips with the loathsome liquid.



Once more, terror-stricken by this horrible formula of blasphemy, which his lips had repeated, the candidate was led to the east, where the Master's platform rose.

"Wouldst thou know the great watchword of our order? Then listen and repeat with me——

"DEATH TO THE RICH—LIFE TO THE POOR!"

The Initiate's eyes flashed, as he uttered the words in a tone of violent emphasis.

And through the Lodge, spoken slowly and in distinct utterance, it floated—that fearful watchword,

—"DEATH TO THE RICH—LIFE TO THE POOR!"

"Prepare for the last trial. Now comes the ordeal of Blood. Fail in this, and thou canst never leave these walls a living man."

At this crisis, a door near the warden's platform was suddenly opened. On the threshold appeared a figure, clad in an array whose splendor shamed even the dazzling regalia of the Lodge.

Clad from head to foot in white velvet, sprinkled with innumerable silver stars, with a dove and olive branch, of gold, emblazoned on his breast, this figure bore in his hand a black wand, with a skull and cross bones affixed to its upper extremity.

As the Worthy Master beheld this figure, he knocked four times in succession, with the gavel or hammer, which lay on the pedestal arising in front of his chair.

"Arise, my brethren, and greet the Grand Herald of the Grand Lodge of the B. H. A. C.!"

With one movement they rose, and bending their heads, held their torches high in the air with the left hand, while the right was clasped upon the breast.

"Hail to the Grand Lodge of the B. H. A. C., and hail to its Messenger, who deigns to walk in our midst."

Descending from the platform, the Worthy Master knelt at its foot, while the Grand Herald took the vacant chair, and, through the apertures of his white veil, surveyed the dazzling array of the Lodge.

"Thy bidding, Most Honorable Herald? Does the Grand Lodge communicate with its subordinate Lodge?"

"I come from the Grand Lodge, Worthy Master, and come to claim a Brother who has betrayed our order, and broken his vows!"

Thus speaking, the Grand Herald advanced to the edge of the platform, with his snow-white robe glittering in every star.

It was evident that his words produced a marked sensation. The kneeling Master started, with the same feeling of surprise which thrilled through an hundred breasts. Gilbert the hunter, with his face veiled—the rifle and the casket resting at his feet—started forward, and listened with great eagerness, his curiosity excited by the message of the Grand Herald

"A Traitor in our Lodge, Right Honorable Herald?"

"In your Lodge, Worthy Master. Let him step forth, ere his name is known. With his face covered by the veil, let him follow me to the Hall of the Grand Lodge, and hear his doom pronounced without a murmur."

That voice, soronous and bold, pierced every ear.

There was a confused movement among the ranks of the Brethren; the murmur of mingled voices; and all was still again.

"His Degree, Right Honorable Herald?"

"He wears the collar of Knighthood. At this moment I behold him. Once more I extend to him the mercy of secresy. He shall be condemned and suffer, without his name being revealed, in case he follows me in silence to the Hall of the Grand Lodge."

Still no answer was made; the Grand Herald might be seen, with his veiled face turned toward a particular point of the room. Gilbert Morgan, gazing through his veil, beheld him looking intently upon the brethren among whom he stood, and awaited with a vague curiosity, tinged with some awe, the utterance of the Traitor's name.

"A Knight," he muttered, "and a traitor too! Hard to believe; for a man who's taken the Oath of the Degree, knows too well the fate of a Traitor, to think o' betrayin' his trust!"

And the stout huntsman spiled and shuddered at once, as he called to mind the words of that fearful Oath. Smiled as if in scorn, at the elaborate blasphemy of those words; shuddered as he remembered the doom which had overtaken a recreant Brother.

The reverry of the hunter was broken by the voice of the Grand Herald.

"Once more I speak to *him*. *His foot is on the box, and by his side the rifle—*"

Gilbert's torch shook with the same tremor which heaved his broad chest, and quivered in every nerve of his iron arm.

"What! I can't a-heerd my ears! '*His foot on the box!*'—"

It seemed to him as if every veiled face was turned toward him, as by an electric impulse; he saw the glittering forms and long lines of torches go swimming round him, as if in a spectral dance.

"Stand forth, Traitor—" the Grand Herald pointed with his wand as he spoke—"Stand forth, perjured Knight, and let the B. H. A. C. know the Traitor who has betrayed the secrets of his Order. Gilbert Morgan, Brother of the Knightly Degree, descend from your seat, and take your place upon the star in the centre of the floor!"

Gilbert heard that voice, and seemed to behold the floor open in a chasm at his feet. He obeyed without a word. Descending from his seat—it was on the second range from the level of the floor—he slowly strode toward the golden star.

He saw the fingers pointing at him ; he heard the whispers, some of pity, others of scorn.

"The Traitor !" "*He false to our order !*" "Let him be dealt with as the law enjoins !"

And yet, tearing the veil from his face, he dashed it on the floor, and with it his collar and his robe of Knighthood. Then folding his arms over his blue hunting-shirt, he gazed towards the Master's platform with an unfaltering eye, though his brown cheek was very pale, his nether lip shaken by an involuntary motion.

"If I am a Traitor, let me have a dog's death !" he cried—  
"That's all !"

"Worthy Master, in the name of the Grand Lodge, I demand from you the body of Gilbert Morgan ; and at the same time direct you to cover his collar and his robe with the colors of mourning, and hang them on the walls of the Lodge, so that all the brethren may know that he no longer lives, but has gone to his reward !"

"I obey. It shall be done !"

And as the Grand Herald descended from the platform, the Worthy Master led Gilbert toward the door, and paused on the threshold. At a sign from the Messenger of the Grand Lodge, a brother bore the box and the rifle over the floor, and placed them in the hands of the Hunter.

"Into your hands I deliver the Traitor. Work your will upon him, and let the doom which he merits fall upon him alone ; let his blood be upon his own head !"

There was something very impressive in the scene. Thrice the brothers waved their torches to and fro, thrice they bent their heads, and thrice repeated the stern decree—

"Let his blood be upon his own head !"

And with his face reddened by the torch glare, Gilbert stood on the threshold, and looked for the last time over the familiar array of his Lodge—saw the Brothers of his own degree waving their torches with the rest—heard their voices mingle in his death-chant.

"Come—I'm ready—" he choked down the agitation which was mounting from his heart to his throat, and turned to the Grand Herald, who stood beside him, pointing the way beyond the threshold with his extended wand. Into the darkness they went forth together ; the door closed behind them, and the Worthy Master, with the torch flashing over his robes, lifted the collar and the robe of the Doomed Man from the floor.

"Brother Scribe, you will strike from our roll the name of the Dead. Honorable Herald, you will cover these with crape, and suspend them behind my chair, as a token of the fate of the lost brother."

It was done. The Scribe—who sat in one corner, before a desk, a dark robe flowing round his form, with a dagger and pen emblazoned in silver on the sleeve, erased the name from the book, which lay open in



the glaring light. Ere a moment had passed, the craped collar and robe fluttered from the hangings behind the Eastern Chair, and it was known to all the brothers, that Gilbert Morgan was dead, from that hour.

“Now let the Candidate prepare for the last ordeal!”

This strange incident had not failed to make a strong impression on the sense of the Candidate. While it passed, he had remained standing at the foot of the platform—gazing in mute wonder upon every point, listening to every word of the scene—and now, with his face manifesting in every line a pitiable terror, he trembled as the voice of the Worthy Master announced the Ordeal of Blood.

—We may, in future pages of this history, describe at length the appearance and character of this Candidate, and reveal him in scenes of another and far different nature.—

“I am faint”—he gasped, as the knife fell from his unclosing fingers: “Do not—do not—urge me farther. This scene bewilders—it is too much”——

Covered as he was with the blood-red sackcloth, he fell insensible to the floor.

How long he remained unconscious, he knew not, but when he recovered the use of his faculties, the dazzling light of the hundred torches no longer illumined the hall. He rose to his feet, and by the dim lamp, which swung from the high ceiling, beheld the floor crowded by kneeling men, who bent their faces on their clasped hands. An unbroken silence reigned. On his platform the Master knelt, his attitude as humble as the humblest of the brethren. The other officers of the Lodge were also on their knees; throughout that dimly lighted hall, nothing was seen but prostrate forms, heads bowed, and hands clasped as if in silent Prayer.

And through the gloom, the symbols of the order gleamed, with a faint and tremulous light.

Suddenly—while the Candidate, awed to the soul, was watching intently for the slightest gesture, or the faintest sound—a flood of ruddy light poured through an open doorway. It grew more vivid, it bathed the room in sudden splendor.

And on the threshold appeared two figures, in robes which resembled shrouds, slowly advancing with a measured step. They held lighted torches over their heads.

As they passed the threshold and took their way through the kneeling brethren, two forms appeared behind them, at the distance of some three or four paces. Clad in the same shroud-like robes, they also bore torches above their heads.

Slowly the four advanced, moving with the same measured step, and it was seen that they bore a funeral bier, on which was placed a coffin of unpainted pine wood. The torch-light glowing over their shroud-like robes, shone in painful distinctness upon the closed lid of the coffin.

They came slowly on. Still the brethren knelt. They reached the star in the centre of the floor. Still no head was lifted ; not a hand was unclasped. They placed the bier upon the star, and stood around it, waving their torches over the rude coffin.

The scene was wild and spectral. These four figures clad in white, that coffin of rough pine wood, were seen in the centre of the dazzling array of robes and symbols.

The figure who stood at the head of the coffin, on the right, suddenly lowered his torch, and dashed it against the closed lid. The others, one by one, imitated his action, and the extinguished torches rested upon the lid of the coffin.

Through the gloom, the voice of the first figure echoed, like a knell—

“ Worthy Master of the Rifle Lodge, No. 256, of the B. H. A. C., into your hands I deliver the dead body of Gilbert Morgan.”

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## CHAPTER NINTH.

### THE FATE OF GILBERT MORGAN.

It may not be altogether without interest, for us to follow the stout hunter on his way, and behold the manner of his Doom.

“ Come ! Follow me ! ” said the voice of the Grand Herald, speaking through the darkness of the passage—“ We ascend these stairs, and pass into the ante-room of the Grand Lodge.”

In silence, with his heart chilled, his senses bewildered by this mysterious incident, Gilbert followed the unknown messenger. They ascended the stairs, and through a doorway, where a curtain supplied the place of oaken panels, passed into the ante-room.

It was a small apartment, illumined by a lamp, which stood on a table covered with dark cloth, with a skull and an unsheathed sword by its side. The place was hung with dark tapestry, on which the various symbols of the order were emblazoned, with the “ B. H. A. C.” glittering brightly in their midst.

A man dressed in a loose garment of white linen, with a dark mantle floating from the shoulders, confronted the Grand Herald, with the veil on his face glowing with the mystic letters, and the point of his sword turned to the uncovered floor.

"Pass on, Grand Herald," he said, "the Grand Sentinel gives thee free passage into the Hall of the Grand Lodge."

Through the doorway—opposite that by which they had entered, and, like it, with a curtain in the place of a door—Gilbert and the Grand Herald silently passed.

In a circular room, hung with purple tapestry, and lighted by candles, which were placed on four separate pedestals, covered with white cloth and rising at intervals from the polished mahogany floor, the Grand Lodge of the Order were assembled.

Gilbert, led by the Grand Herald, looked from side to side, and beheld some twenty men, veiled in robes of dark purple, seated in a circle, around the white pedestals. Their faces were concealed by a sort of cowl, made of scarlet velvet, and glittering with golden letters and symbols. Altogether, the effect of the scene was very impressive.

Before the Hunter arose a platform, with its three steps covered with dark cloth. In a chair, adorned with cumbrous carvings, with wide arms, and a high back, surmounted by a golden crown, sat a veiled form, clad in a flowing robe of purple, glittering, from the shoulders to the feet, with vine leaves, stars, a dagger and a skull, and other symbols of the Order.

This figure wore over his face a veil of white lace, which permitted his bronzed features to be dimly seen : around his brow, a coronet of golden leaves was twined, and from its centre waved a single long and slender plume of raven darkness.

"You stand before the 'Most Venerable, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the B. H. A. C.'"

The Grand Herald, as he uttered these words, laid his hand on the hunter's shoulder, and whispered—"Kneel ! You are now in the presence of your Judge !"

In the centre of the space, bounded by the four pedestals, the Huntsman knelt, his plain hunting-shirt strongly contrasted with the purple robes of the encircling figures, his rude sunburnt features with the half-veiled face of the Grand Master, to whom his gaze was turned. By his side, in the white robe sprinkled with stars, the Herald stood, the wand grasped in his extended hand.

The Hunter looked wonderingly around, while the sensation of mystery, and the terror that comes from mystery, began to crowd his brain with images of gloom and death.

Not a word was spoken. Like lifeless effigies, those figures were grouped around ; like a corse placed erect, with a veil over its frozen face, the Grand Master sat on his throne, the lights playing warmly over his flowing robe, and shining on each brilliant symbol.

"Have you no word, in answer to our charge ?"

It was the voice of the Grand Master, and broke with a sudden emphasis upon the Hunter's ear. He could not answer ; the mysterious



nature of the summons which had called him hither ; the fear which had fallen upon the faces of his brethren, as they heard him charged with the unpardonable treason ; the anticipation of an approaching Doom, which would be as terrible as it was secret—all rushed upon the stout Woodsman at once, and held him dumb.

"Of what am I accused ?" he faltered at last—"Whar's the man that dar' say it ?"

Even as he knelt, raising his clenched hand, while the arm shook with a ceaseless motion, he uttered the words in a husky voice, and with his head bent forward, awaited an answer.

"Deathsman of the B. H. A. C.—advance ! Prepare the cord !"

Gilbert did not see the form, which, advancing from the circle, stood at his back, but he heard the footstep, and felt that his Executioner was at hand.

It was indeed a hideous figure, with a death's-head mask upon his face, the fleshless bones of a skeleton traced upon his breast and limbs, and in his hand, covered with a black glove, painted in resemblance of a skeleton hand, he bore a cord, which, wound once around the fingers, dangled to the floor.

"Accuser of the Guilty—advance !" again the Grand Master's voice was heard.

And in front of Gilbert, on the right, appeared a man veiled in a shapeless robe, black as midnight, and with no ornament to relieve its drooping cowl, or gloomy folds.

"Speak, Accuser, what is the Crime of the Accused ?"

Without lifting the cowl, the Accuser spoke ; Gilbert listening all the while with trembling earnestness.

"I accuse Gilbert Morgan of the violation of his Oath as a Brother of our Order. I accuse him of betraying his sacred trust, as a Knight of the Scarlet Degree !"

"Accuse me ? It's a lie—a lie, by —— !" shouted Gilbert, with an involuntary impulse of anger and profanity.

Half-starting from the floor, he flung his clenched hand toward the Grand Master, while the pallor of his face vanished before a flush of ungovernable rage.

"Accuse me o' violatin' my oath as a Brother, my trust as a Knight ? I don't keer who ses it—I fling the lie in his teeth ! And I'll prove it to his face, with my foot upon this box, this rifle in my hands !"

He towered in the midst of the secret band, his foot upon the box, his own true rifle in his grasp. There was a look of defiance on his brow, a fearless scorn upon his lip.

Yet at the same moment, a cord was thrown over his head ; it tightened round his neck ; he felt himself dragged rudely backward, and sinking on one knee, gasped for breath.

"Ah! By ——! This is a coward's trick—to murder a man like a dog!"

Struggling fiercely while that cord tightened about his neck, Gilbert rolled his head from side to side, and saw the point of an unsheathed sword glimmering from the folds of every robe. The Accuser held a pistol to his throat, a grim weapon, huge in the barrel, with a stock of heavy mahogany inlaid with silver. At the same instant, the Grand Herald drew a dagger from beneath his white garment, and stood ready to strike its keen point into the victim's heart.

"Let me know my crime—" muttered Gilbert, every word rendered thick and gurgling by the tightening cord—"If I have violated the oath of a Free Brother, or betrayed the trust of a true Knight, let me know it!"

"You have violated your oath as a Brother," exclaimed the Grand Master, starting from his chair—"At your initiation, you took a solemn obligation, never to desert the Order; never to undertake any enterprise, much less enter into bonds of marriage, without the Decree of the Grand Lodge, affirming your purpose. To-night, without consulting your own Lodge, or the Grand Lodge, you resolved to enter into marriage bonds with Madeline, the orphan, who dwells in the home of Peter Dorfner. You resolved to desert our Order, break your vows, and renounce all allegiance to your superiors—I hold the Accusation in my hand. It is signed by a Brother of the Knightly Degree."

Utterly confounded by this charge, Gilbert felt the rope about his neck, saw the dagger and the pistol levelled at his heart, and could not speak a word in answer.

"More than this—" continued the Grand Master, as he stood erect on his platform, with the parchment of the Accusation in his hand; "you have perjured yourself in another point. By your vow, you are bound to bring at once, without a moment's delay, all sums of money in your possession, either to the chest of your own Lodge—or, in case the sum is beyond an hundred doubloons—to the Treasury of the Grand Lodge. Have you done this? The box at your feet contains one thousand pieces of gold. You know—nay, you dare not deny—that it was your intention to appropriate this sum to your own purpose. Appointed, at the last meeting of your Lodge, to *secure* this money,—appointed by your Lodge, at the Decree of the Grand Lodge—you have violated your trust. And in proof of this also, I hold the accusation in my hand, made and signed by a Brother!"

"I was in the Lodge, with the box in my hand, about to deliver it, when—"

The words were interrupted by the gradual tightening of the cord. Thrown on his back, Gilbert lay without speech or motion, his face darkening into livid purple, his eyes protruding and blood-shot.

"Brothers of the Grand Lodge—you have heard the Accusation, made

not only by the Venerable Accuser, but affirmed by your Grand Master? What is your Decree?"

"Guilty!" was echoed by every voice.

"Your judgment?"

And, in chorus, they uttered the formula of the B. H. A. C.—

"Let him be stripped of all Regalia, for he has dishonored that Regalia. Let the name of Brother be torn from his heart, for he has covered that name with infamy. Let him be put under the Ban of the Order, and then surrendered to the vengeance of the first Brother who may encounter him; for he has broken his vows, and severed every tie that bound him to our protection and our love."

"The Grand Lodge will now prepare for the solemn ceremony of the Ban of Excommunication," said the Grand Master, descending from his platform.

The stout hunter uttered an involuntary groan. The cord grew tighter; he struggled fiercely, in the effort to free himself from its stifling coil, but the hue of his sunburnt face was changed to livid purple, his lips became the color of bluish clay, and every vein, every muscle of his visage was distorted by the impulse of harrowing physical torture.

"It is—false—" he groaned, and then all became a blank—his senses failed him—there seemed a blood-red light flashing upon his starting eyeballs—and all was darkness.

When he recovered his senses, he found himself standing in front of the Grand Master's platform, supported on one side by the Deathsman, on the other by the Accuser.

A pale bluish flame shone over the encircling forms, and gave their robes a spectral and unnatural appearance. That flame was only the combined light of the torches, which they held in their uplifted arms.

Before the hunter was a large vessel, made of dark wood, and encircled with iron hoops. It was filled with a red liquid.

And as the Grand Master waved his hand, the Brethren advanced between the hunter and the Grand Master, and plunged their lighted torches into the vessel, filled with the red liquid. "Thus—" they cried, as torch after torch was extinguished—"Thus perish the soul of the False Brother!"

The twenty torches were plunged into the wooden vessel, their flames extinguished, their handles projecting from the red liquid. A candle, held by the Grand Master, shed its faint light over the scene, and dimly disclosed the circle of shrouded forms, with the half-naked figure of the Hunter in the centre.

His arms were pinioned; the cord was about his neck; but half-aroused from a deathlike swoon, his senses were deadened by a leaden apathy. As torch after torch hissed into the vessel, and flashed with a more vivid brightness, as it sunk in darkness, Gilbert thought he was entangled in the horrors of some unutterable dream.



"The False Brother is degraded," said the voice of the Accuser—"His name has been inscribed on the Book of Judgment; he has been laid under the irrevocable Ban of the Covenant!"

"Accursed—accursed, forever!" the words broke in faint whispers through the gloom.

"Then do I give him over to the Deathsman of our Order. Let his death be secret; let it be speedy, so that his form may no longer pollute the earth, and shame the broad canopy of heaven with the sight of a Living Traitor!"

Gilbert felt the gripe of the Deathsman on his arm. Without a word, he suffered himself to be led along the floor, and saw, with an apathetic gaze, the shrouded figures kneeling on either side.

He reached the curtained wall, and—while the Deathsman, in his hideous mask, with the form of a skeleton traced upon his limbs—lifted the candle, and extended his hand, as if to point the way, he heard the voices of the Brethren, speaking in a murmur—

"Farewell," they whispered—"Farewell to the forsworn and fallen!"

The hangings were lifted by the Deathsman, and a narrow doorway appeared in the light.

His arms pinioned, his neck encircled by the cord, Gilbert passed under the raised hangings, and in an instant was enveloped in thick darkness. A cloth had been placed on his forehead; it hung over his eyes, and shrouded their sight.

Not a word was spoken, but he felt himself dragged onward, along a narrow passage; dragged by the cord, which encircled his neck.

The bandage was removed from his eyes. It was some time before the hunter could see clearly; but when he recovered the use of his vision, he found himself in a small room, with wainscotted walls, and a cheerful fire, smoking and crackling, on an open hearth.

A table of unpainted oak stood in the centre, before the fire, with an arm-chair at either end. On this table were placed a bottle, a goblet of silver, and a clay pipe.

Gilbert could scarce believe his sight. He turned from the ruddy blaze, and beheld the Deathsman standing by his side.

"What does all this mean?" he asked—"a comfortable fire, a bottle o' wine, a cup, and a pipe o' tobacco!"

"It means, that a half-hour of life is still permitted to you—" said the voice, echoing from within the death's-head mask. "In that half-hour, you are allowed the warmth of the fire, the cheerful influence of tobacco and wine. Yet, when you have exhausted the pipe and the bottle, the hour of your death will be at hand.—Until that moment comes, I leave you."

There was but one door to the room. It was opposite the fire.

Gilbert beheld it close, as the Deathsman passed the threshold, and heard the key turn in the lock. He stood for a moment, gazing about him, with a bewildered glance.

"Is there no way of escape?" he muttered, pacing rapidly around the room, and feeling every panel of the wainscot. "No secret passage out o' this cursed den? Little did I think, some years ago, when first I was initiated into the order, and took the oath to rob and murder, for the benefit of my Lodge, that I'd ever be caught in a trap like this!"

There was no way of escape; the panels were perfectly smooth, and firmly jointed into each other. The hunter turned to the fire, and started with a new surprise. A coat of dark-green velvet, faced with gold, was hung over the arm-chair, and beneath it appeared a shirt of fine linen, with ruffled collar and bosom, and a waistcoat of buff-colored cloth, glittering with small buttons of gold.

"I'm cold," he laughed—and shuddered at the same moment—for, even in his merriment, the incalculable Power of the Secret Order awed his iron heart—"An' this fine gear will do for me, jist as well as my hunting-shirt, leather belt, and powder-horn!"

It was not long ere he stood in front of the hearth, clad in the green coat, with the lace ruffles protruding from the buff vest. This costume displayed the outlines of his massive figure in strong relief, and its bright colors threw his sunburnt features boldly into the light.

He flung himself in the chair, filled the goblet, and lighted the clay pipe, whose long stem reached from his lips to his waist.

"Anybody, to see me, now, 'ud think I was a gentleman o' fortin' takin' my ease, and carin' a cuss for nobody!"

He drained the goblet, and the smoke of the pipe floated in bluish wreaths above his head.

"That 'ere wine goes through the veins like melted fire! Sich tobacco as this, a feller don't often see in these parts. Cuba, rale Cuba, from the West Ingies, as I'm a poor miserable Devil, doomed to be choked out o' life, in this cut-throat den!"

And as he drank and smoked—the warmth of the fire imparting its influence to his chilled limbs—he became, by degrees, cheerful and excited, and then a leaden drowsiness sank on his senses, and dulled his eyes and ears.

The bowl fell from his hand, and lay upturned on the table; the pipe was shattered into fragments at his feet. After all that he had endured, with the certainty of death before him, the hunter sunk into a dead slumber. His hands were crossed upon his buff waistcoat, and, with his head resting against the back of the chair, his mouth wide open, he slept the dreamless sleep of weariness and exhaustion.

As the pipe fell from his hand, the door opened behind him, and the Deathsman, hideous in his mask and skeleton disguise, once more appeared.

## CHAPTER TENTH.

## THE GOLDEN SIGNET AND ITS COUNTERPART.

"THE drug has done its work—" he exclaimed, in a voice whose joyous intonation could not be drowned, even by his mask—"The fellow has done his work. We have used him—he shall trouble us no more!"

Scarce had he spoken, when an incident occurred, which exercised an important influence on the fate of the doomed hunter.

At the back of the Deathsman, treading at his very heels, appeared a man, whose sharp features were shadowed by a three-cornered hat, while his slender limbs were clad in dark attire, made after the fashion of the olden time, the coat with its skirts drooping to his knees, the vest reaching far below the waist, and the ends of a white neckcloth dangling on the breast.

The face of this man—clad, not in the robes and symbols of the secret order, but in the attire of a plain citizen—was marked by a long hooked nose, pinched lips, sharp eyes, and high cheek-bones. It was dark-brown in complexion, and the hair which straggled from beneath his three-cornered hat, was of jetty blackness, with here and there a lock of silvery whiteness.

"While he is in this stupor, we will have him conveyed on to the City, placed on shipboard, and then!—ho, for the Coast of Africa, and the Slave Trade. Gilbert Morgan will never trouble the Wissahikon woods again."

A smile was perceptible on the sharp features of the stranger, dressed in black, as he stole softly on tip-toe behind the Deathsman, and touched his shoulder with the forefinger of his right hand.

"Tell your Grand Master that I wish to see him, and have a few moments' conversation with him," said the unknown, while the smile deepened over his face.

"Hey? who spoke?" The Deathsman wheeled suddenly, and saw the slender form of the stranger—"Who are *you*?"

"Will you convey my message to your Grand Master?" And taking a handsome snuff-box from his waistcoat pocket, he tapped the lid, and conveyed some portion of its contents to his nose.

The hideous mask covered the face of the Deathsman; the surprise, the overwhelming wonder stamped on his features, was not visible, but as he spoke again, the intonation of his voice—no longer deep and measured—but harsh and hurried, told the story of his amazement. "And who



are you? You dare intrude upon the councils of our Order—you! Know you not—”

“Pooh, pooh! That is sufficient,” said the gentleman, smiling all over his sharp features—“Convey my message, and let the Grand Master attend me.”

The unknown crossed his hands behind his back, and advanced to the hearth.

For a moment the Deathsman seemed to hesitate, and again he asked—

“Who are you? Your name, your business here? If you belong to the Grand Lodge, give me the Word and the sign—”

“I shall do no such thing, for I do not belong to the Grand Lodge. I merely wish to see the Grand Master. Is that not plain enough? Can you understand me now?”

“This is against our laws. You—a person altogether unknown—have penetrated into this house, and dared to spy out those mysteries in which you have neither part nor lot. Without regalia—without one sign to indicate Brotherhood or authority, you desire to see the Grand Master. It cannot be—”

The Deathsman stood, resting his hand on the chair of the unconscious hunter, with the light playing freely over his grotesque disguise, and showing, in bold relief, the contrast between it and the plain, dark apparel of the unknown.

“It can be—” the slender gentleman wheeled suddenly, and tapped the lid of his snuff-box—“It must!”

Then, passing before the slumbering Gilbert, he seated himself in the unoccupied chair, and stretched his spare limbs, with silver buckles on the knees and shoes, in the cheerful glow of the fire.

The Deathsman retired in silence; again the key grated in the lock.

“A huge fellow—brawny form—a vast fund of nerve. Something might be made of him. That forehead tells the story of a man who won’t stand upon trifles, or—once aroused—be held back by scruples of any sort.”

Glancing upon the brown visage of the sleeper, the unknown very coolly applied himself to his favorite stimulant—the dark tobacco dust—crossed his limbs in a posture of great complacency, and, placing his thumbs together, seemed to be altogether at home in this mysterious chamber.

The key grated in the lock, and as the door flew open, the Grand Master entered, his tall and somewhat commanding form clad in the purple robe, dazzling with embroidery, the white veil shadowing his bronzed features, and the solitary plume waving from the coronal of gold leaves on his forehead.

Advancing one step from the threshold, he paused, and exclaimed, in that deep tone, evidently assumed—

"Who is it that demands audience with the Grand Master of the B. H. A. C.?"

"A-h—you have come,"—the unknown carelessly turned his head over his shoulder—"I have waited for you. I have *waited*. Be pleased to close the door, turn the key, and come hither."

The Grand Master started; his eyes flashed, even through the lace which veiled his features. For an instant he stood as if completely confounded by the words of this slender gentleman, whose neat black attire, and features—sharpened as by the systematic attrition of traffic—indicated the plain citizen, the restless merchant of the large city.

However, as though mastering his indignation for the moment, he quietly closed the door, turned the key in the lock, and approached the unknown.

"Now, sir, I will hear you. After I have heard—" his voice, growing bold and harsh with anger, was interrupted by the sharp tones of the gentleman in dark attire.

"After you have heard, you will *obey*. That is plain, sir. Will you permit me to ask you a question?"

"Speak on."

"To whom does the Initiate into a subordinate Lodge of the B. H. A. C. swear allegiance?"

"To the Honorable Master of the Lodge, of course. Did you know any thing of our Order?"

"Bah! Enough of that kind of talk. Let me ask you another question. To whom does the Honorable Master of a subordinate Lodge of the B. H. A. C., swear allegiance?"

"To the Most Venerable Grand Master of the B. H. A. C. for the Continent of America—to *me*!"

And the dazzling robe fluttered with the impulse of the broad chest which swelled beneath it. The entire appearance of this personage, clad in kingly robes, and standing erect, was in vivid contrast with the plain attire and careless attitude of the slender gentleman.

"And, my dear friend—" the snuff-box was again called into play—"if I may be so impertinent as to press the subject—To whom does the Right Venerable, the Grand Master of the Order for the Continent of America, swear allegiance?"

"The *Most* Venerable, you mean—"

"No, sir. The *Right* Venerable. 'Most' does not belong to you—nor to your office."

The Grand Master was silent.

"You seem to hesitate. Is not the question easy? You remember the last act of your installation into the Grand Master's chair, when the box or casket containing the Will of your predecessor was placed in

your hands, sealed with the Great Seal of the Order, which no one save the Elect Grand Master dare touch?"

"True—there was an obligation—a charge—but there is no such body in existence as the Supreme Lodge of the Order, controlling its operations throughout the World."

There was a strange hesitation in the manner, a perceptible tremor in the voice of the Grand Master.

"Ah—ha! You have discovered at last, that there is such a body as the 'SUPREME LODGE'—" the sharp-featured smiled in his parched lips and small black eyes—"And the obligation that you took, invoking upon your head the vengeance of God, the tortures of Eternal Death, in case you broke your vow—do you remember its last and most important word?"

"Who are you?" fiercely exclaimed the Grand Master, unconsciously echoing the question which the Deathsman had asked—"You have dared to question me, and I have tamely answered. Now, it is my turn to question; yours to answer. Unfold at once your name, your mission within these walls, or, at a sign from me, the members of the Order will throng this room, and mete out to you the doom of the—spy."

He raised his right arm, and his eyes flashed through the veil with the glare of ungovernable rage.

"And in case I refuse at any time to obey the mandate of the Supreme Lodge, when conveyed to me in ancient form, the Brothers of the Order shall be absolved from all allegiance to me; the Lodges on this Continent are from that moment empowered by the sacred customs of the B. H. A. C., to disown my sway, dishonor my name, and hunt me to the death, under the irrevocable BAN.'"

As he repeated these words, in a slow and measured tone, the gentleman dressed in black arose, and passing before the sleeping hunter, confronted the Grand Master.

"This is the *last word* of the Obligation which you took over the dead body of your Predecessor. Do you remember it now?"

It was a singular thing to see the change which came over the gorgeously arrayed Grand Master, as this plainly attired man uttered these words. He was silent; he tottered, and only saved himself from falling by placing his hand upon the back of Gilbert's chair.

"And I will recognise the Messenger of the Supreme Lodge, whenever he appears holding in his hand the counterpart of the golden signet, which I wear on my heart as the emblem of my authority, and also as the Great Seal of the Grand Lodge——'"

Extending his hand, the unknown grasped the golden medal, or, to describe it more properly, the Great Seal, which, supported by a heavy chain—also of gold—shone on the Grand Master's breast.



"You behold the figures on this medal, which—when it is impressed upon the melted wax—appear in the distinct shape of King Solomon on his throne, with the Temple in the distance, and Hebrew and Arabic characters, traced on the Mosaic floor at his feet? Now look upon the counterpart of this signet."

He placed in the hands of the Grand Master a small casket of dark wood, the lid of which flew open at his touch.

"Hah!" ejaculated the Grand Master, as he beheld the medal which the casket contained—"It is indeed very like the signet—"

"Like? It is the same, only on your medal the figures are sunken; here they are raised. Do you want further proof?"

He took the medal of the Grand Master, and placed his own upon it. The raised figures on the one, fitted into the sunken spaces on the other, with so much exactness, that the two seemed but one piece of solid gold.

"What do you demand?"—the voice of the Grand Master was changed from its late fiery and indignant tones. "I must confess that it appears to me, that this may be only an imposition—I never heard of the Supreme Lodge as a body in actual existence—"

"You thought, my good sir, that it was only a *masonic* expression for the Power of the Almighty, and, governed by this thought, have assumed titles and privileges which do not belong to you—have in fact invaded the Prerogative of the Supreme Lodge, and usurped its functions!"

The gentleman in dark attire placed the casket within his waistcoat, and again supplied his nostrils with tobacco dust, as he remarked—

"Right Venerable Grand Master, you will take one arm of this insensible man, and assist me to convey him into the presence of the Supreme Lodge—"

"But the Grand Lodge await my return. The Brothers will think strangely of my absence—"

"They will have to continue *thinking strangely*, for a great while," said the dark gentleman, with an ominous smile. "Was it not enough, sir, that you held in your grasp the revenues and power of the Order? At your word, a thousand men—all bold and unscrupulous, and fitted by desperation for any deed—started into action, on every part of the Continent of America. At your mandate, the ocean was whitened by the sails of at least five hundred ships, whose dark flags bore the same skull and crossbones with the dagger and the motto of the order. You had only to speak, and lo! in any of the cities of the North or South, your bidding was done—property and life became, through the ten thousand hands of the Order, your easy prey. But this it seems was not enough. Not enough to hold a power, which, striking from the dark—deemed fabulous by the great mass—rivalled, in its certainty of action, the sway of an absolute Monarch, and, at the same time, was secured from all danger, all responsibility, by the cloud of an impenetrable mystery. Not

enough to dwell in a splendid mansion, in the great city, and be caressed by the rich and aristocratic, while every Minion of the Crown thought it but a proper reverence for 'high birth and great property' to do you especial honor. This did not satisfy your ambition. You aimed at the supreme power—ay, sir, only this night, laid your plans to convey into your own hands *the thousand doubloons, which were ordered to be secured for the use of the Supreme Lodge.*"

Even beneath his royal robe, the Grand Master trembled like a reed in the blast.

"You know my name—" he faltered.

The slender man tapped the lid of his snuff-box, and, with a deep bow, offered its contents to the Grand Master—

"Will you take the arm of this insensible man?"

It was done. They raised the sleeping man from the chair, and, supporting his unconscious form between them, departed from the room. As they passed the threshold, the gentleman in black whispered pleasantly to the Grand Master—

"You do not know *all* the secrets of this old house. You doubtless thought that all its rooms were occupied by your subordinates, and quite forgot the fact, that the second story of the back part of this mansion communicates with the steep hill on the north, by a door and a passage not ten feet from where we stand. Do you believe in the Supreme Lodge now?"

They passed the threshold, and, instead of descending the stairs into the room of the Grand Lodge, traversed the corridor in an opposite direction. Presently, as he grasped the body of the unconscious hunter with his muscular right arm, the Grand Master heard a key turn in a lock.

At the same moment, the whisper of the unknown thrilled on his ear, even through the darkness:

"Let us enter. This passage leads us into the bosom of the hill, at the back of the mansion."

Scarcely had the Grand Master and the unknown, bearing the form of Gilbert, left the small apartment, warmed by the cheerful wood fire, and lighted by the candle on the table, when a figure crossed its threshold, and the Deathsman appeared once more.

"Strange! The Grand Master not here, and the Traitor also gone!" he ejaculated, as he surveyed the vacant apartment. "Who can it be, that so boldly desired an audience with him?"

He left the room with a hurried step, and in a few moments reappeared, with the Grand Herald by his side.

"This is indeed singular," said that personage, as his white robe, dazzling with stars, glittered in the light—"Gone, did you say? The Grand

Master, the doomed and the unknown? Have you no traces? By what means could they have obtained egress from the house?"

To this hurried question, which he propounded without raising the veil from his face, there was no answer. These two ministers of the Grand Organization of the B. H. A. C. left the apartment, and descended into the Hall of the Grand Lodge together.

Day was breaking without the desolate mansion; and in the hall, the candles standing on the pedestals, were burning fast toward their sockets.

Still seated in a circle, their purple robes glowing in the wavering light, the Brothers of the Grand Lodge awaited the return of their Chief. His platform was vacant; the Grand Herald, leaning on his wand, stood near its foot, and by his side, the Deathsman. Through the masks which covered their faces, they gazed over the forms of the brethren, who conversed in whispers; their all-absorbing topic, the unaccountable disappearance of the Great Head of the Lodge.

"It cannot be done—" whispered the Deathsman—"It is against all custom, for even a Right Venerable Warden to adjourn the Grand Lodge. It cannot be done without the presence of our Chief."

"Yet, what else can we do?" interposed the Grand Herald—"Our chief, who opened this session, is absent. It is near daybreak, and we do not wish to be seen leaving this house in the broad light of morning. Brethren," he cried aloud, "in the absence of the Grand Master, I would suggest that the Grand Warden be empowered to close this session—"

The sentence was never completed. For, as the lights were burning in the sockets, the hangings opposite the platform were raised, and a murmur of surprise broke the stillness—

"The Grand Master! At last he has come—"

The Grand Master, clad in the robes of his office, strode slowly, and with a measured step, through the ranks of his brethren. As he ascended the platform, it might be seen that the golden signet was still suspended from his neck, while his bronzed features were covered by the veil.

"Brothers of the Grand Lodge—" he began, but paused—as four veiled figures, bearing a coffin, crossed the threshold and advanced toward the platform. Every member could not fail to observe that the voice of the Grand Master was strangely changed, as he continued:

"Behold the corse of Gilbert Morgan, who was executed in my presence by the Ministers of the Supreme Lodge!"

The effect of his words upon the members of the Order, was not discernible, for as he spoke, the lights, flickering for the last time, went out in



darkness, and, amid the whispers which echoed from every side, only three words were audible—"The Supreme Lodge!"

The Grand Master had been gone for the space of three—perchance four hours.

Shall we lift the curtain from the councils of the Supreme Lodge, and reveal the history of those hours?

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## CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

### THE SUPREME LODGE.

WE now return to the moment when the Grand Master heard the Unknown whisper—

"This passage leads us into the bosom of the hill."

He also heard the door close behind him, and felt the form of Gilbert press heavily upon him. All was dark, but he was conscious that the passage which they traversed was narrow, the atmosphere dense, the ceiling but an inch or two higher than the top of his plume.

Urged repeatedly by the unknown, to be careful of the form of Gilbert, to grasp him firmly, and by no means loosen his hold, even for an instant, the Grand Master counted twenty paces, when his course was suddenly ended.

"You will enter the room on the right, and await my coming."

The Grand Master extended his hand, and felt the panels of a door. It opened, and, as he crossed the threshold, closed again.

It was a cell-like apartment, with ceiling, wall and floor of roughly plastered stone. In the centre, on an old chest, a small lamp was placed. It was evident, at first sight, that this room, resembling a grave-vault, was sunken in the bosom of the hill, which ascended precipitously in the rear of the old house.

Seating himself on a chest, the Grand Master gathered his robes about him—for the air was chill and damp—and, with an ejaculation of wonder, surveyed the cell.

He had heard of the wealth of the Order, had, indeed, been intrusted with the control of a great portion of that wealth, but this room displayed a sight, which exceeded the bounds of all reasonable credibility.

The floor was covered with chests of every shape and form. Some

were open, others closed ; here they were thrown together in a confused pile, and again—massy and iron-bound—they stood apart. The unclosed chests were stored with gold and silver coins of every mould and form, from the uncouth Chinese money, to the round and substantial Spanish doubloon.

On the closed lids were scattered stores of gold and silver plate ; and from the aperture of the half-opened chests, projected cloths, velvets and laces, of the richest texture and most costly dyes. It seemed as though every part of the world had sent its tribute to swell the countless wealth of this narrow cell. Wherever the Grand Master turned, he saw nothing but gold and silver coin, cloths of every pattern and hue, plate of the most precious metals, worthy to grace the board of a crowned Despot.

“The treasury of the Supreme Lodge !” he exclaimed, and, raising a heavy goblet—with the veil still drooping over his face—he examined the delicate sculpturing which adorned the narrow stem and capacious bowl.

“Will no one wake me up from this dev’lish dream ?”

Gilbert unclosed his eyes, and found himself encircled by a scene, whose unearthly solemnity resembled the vague spirit-pictures of a dream.

A lamp hung from the dome-like ceiling of a narrow cell, and shed its faint light before his eyes. The corners of the cell were dark ; the light only served to reveal the brown visage of the Hunter, who, clad in the coat of green velvet, faced with gold, looked about him, in blank wonder.

Before him was a circular table, on which a book, huge in size, bound in white parchment, was placed. Its golden clasps glimmered in the light.

Around this table, three figures attired in gowns, with cowls, resembling the monkish robes of the Old World, were seated in arm-chairs of unpainted oak. The figure, seated, directly opposite where the Hunter stood, rested a small white hand upon this large volume.

It was a long while before the hunter could recover his wandering senses ; he remained standing before the table for the space of a quarter of an hour, and in this time, not a word was spoken ; the three figures were motionless as stone.

Gilbert advanced a step, determined to touch the extended hand, and assure himself that it was but a hand of wax or marble, not the hand of a living man. Yet, as he advanced, the hand was slowly lifted ; he fell back into his original position, crossing his arms, while his features assumed an expression of sullen determination.

“Gilbert Morgan—” said a voice, somewhat remarkable for the softness and music of its intonation—“Condemned to death by a power that you cannot see, about to be stricken by the hand which strikes from the darkness, a chance of life is offered unto you. Will you accept it ?”

It was the central figure that spoke, with his white hand resting on the cover of the book all the while.

The reply of the Hunter was characteristic :

"I'll accept most anythin'—do most everythin'—only get me out of this wolf-trap."

"Not only life, but wealth and power are offered to you. The wealth, the power of the B. H. A. C. are within your grasp. We have selected you as the Candidate for Initiation into the Degree of Grand Master of the Order!"

"Initiation!" echoed Gilbert. "Ain't the Grand Master elected by the Grand Lodge? Who are you, that trap a man in this 'ere way—drag him from scene to scene—pen him up with three unknown men, dressed in black, in a grave-vault, like this?"

Without seeming to take notice of his words, or of the flushed cheek and indignant glance which accompanied their utterance, the central figure continued :

"There is no such thing as an election, or the power to elect in our Order. The Honorable Master is designated by the Grand Master; in his turn the Grand Master is designated by a higher authority, whose existence is unknown to the rest of the brethren. That higher authority, is the Supreme Lodge. Its chief is known, not as Supreme Master, but as THE INVISIBLE HEAD of the Order. You stand in his presence now."

"Grand Master!" muttered Gilbert—"That were a prize indeed, for one like me! Why, I kin hardly sign my name—"

"You will never need to sign your name. The signet will bear witness of your authority. The man who becomes Grand Master, must be known to the world, only as the dead are known. From this hour, the name of Gilbert Morgan will only be pronounced as the name of a dead man. Again I ask you, are you willing to pass from the edge of the grave which yawns beneath you to the Grand Master's chair?"

Like a flood of light, pouring suddenly over a mass of dark clouds, a multitude of thoughts and memories rushed through the hunter's brain. He was a rude man—rude in speech, bold in deed—but his forehead indicated a mind of great and petuliar natural power. Utterly uneducated, there lurked in the recesses of his nature—like sparks among the ashes—the elements of a wide and grasping ambition. His eye grew brighter as he heard the words of the figure, who called himself the Invisible; his clenched hand was pressed upon his forehead.

"Grand Master! You don't mean to say, that I, a rough backwoods-man o' the Wissahikon, can become that ar'! I—I—sit on the throne, and, with a word, manage the Lodges of Canada, the New England Provinces, New York, Pennsilvany, and all the South? Gentlemen, it's not kind of you, to make fun of a dyin' man—"



"I have said it, and it can be done ! I swear it, by the Seven Watchers of the Holy 'Temple !"

"Show me the way," cried Gilbert—"Name the manner o' th' Initiation."

"Listen, and in silence. I will read to you the preparatory Lesson of the Grand Master's degree."—The Invisible unclosed the Book : with his white hand laid on the parchment page, inscribed with the characters of an unknown tongue, he continued : "This is the great Book of the Covenant, written in a tongue, known only to the Elect of the Supreme Lodge, and intelligible to them, whatsoever their country or language. This Book was written thousands of years ago, and bears witness of the Covenant made by the GREAT BEING in the Temple of Jerusalem with the millions of mankind, in the day of Solomon. That Covenant—as you are well aware, having been initiated in the Knightly degree—was in these words : *As long as the sun shineth by day, and the stars give light by night, so long will I, THE JEHOVAH, listen to the cry of my people the Poor, redress their wrongs, and scatter the bolts of my vengeance upon the forehead of the oppressor.*—Solomon betrayed the Covenant, and died under the Ban of the Order, the Curse of his God. Even his countless wealth, his superhuman intellect, could not save him from the 'Traitor's doom !

"Yet I must impart to you the preparatory lesson, or the Degree of High Priest, otherwise termed the Grand Master's degree—"

"The Brother that would take upon himself the great work of a High Priest, must cut loose from his heart every tie of friendship or love. He must have no friend ; he must love only the Brotherhood over which he desires to rule. And in order that an unworthy person may not obtain this great office, it is decreed that the Candidate for Initiation shall pass through a certain ordeal, the manner and form of which is left to the will of the Invisible Head, while its *certain tendency must always be, to sever the heart, by an irrevocable blow, from all ties of friendship or love, and devote it forever to the Brotherhood.*

"Are you ready for an Ordeal of this kind, however terrible?"

"I am !"

"Are you willing that your name shall never be heard on earth again as the name of a living man ?"

"Yes—willing even for that !"

"Will you consent to enter at once upon the Ordeal, or trial, which shall qualify you for the duties of your great office ?"

"I consent ! You can't name the thing that I'm afeerd to do !"

The Invisible Head closed the volume, and rested his hand again upon its clasped lid.

He seemed gazing, from the shadow of his cowl, upon the face of the hunter, while a dead silence fell upon the gloomy chamber. Gilbert, in

his green and gold attire, stood before the table, his arms still crossed, his brown features still compressed by an expression of unshaken resolution.

"*Madeline!*"—the word came from the lips of the Invisible.

The Hunter started, but did not utter a word, though the name thrilled like electric fire through his veins.

"At this moment, while you stand before me, she struggles in the embrace of her—Seducer! You, the Plighted Husband, stand before the Supreme Lodge of the B. H. A. C., and not one mile from the spot, Madeline, your Sworn Wife, yields to her Unknown Lover."

Gilbert did not speak, but—shaken by an agony that he fiercely endeavored to master—raised his clenched hands to his forehead.

"Can you hear this without a murmur? Can you think of your wife returning the kisses of a man unknown to her, and on your wedding night, and not groan? Then have you the heart to become our Minister; then have you the iron nerve, requisite for a Grand Master!"

"Go on—" said Gilbert, as his brown face was deformed by swollen veins—"You see I don't flinch. I can bear even that! Mad'lin' in the arms of—*her lover*. Yes, even that. If this is your trial, I'm through it already. Go on—the end of all this?"

"Let it be spoken in few words. If you are the man we seek, if you are willing to test your truth, your nerve, by a trial that will bind you to the Order, and bind the Order to you, at once and forever, then take this knife—"

"Well—I see the knife—go on!"

Take the knife, seek the chamber of your plighted wife, even as she clings to her lover—and—"

"Strike it to his heart?" shrieked Gilbert, with a wild burst of laughter—"That is not hard to do."

"True; that would, indeed, be an action without difficulty or danger. Such a deed, the Invisible does not demand from you. You plunge your steel into the Seducer's heart, and are avenged. What self-denial, what high purpose is exhibited in this? None! A mere brutal revenge, a cowardly murder; nothing more. But to punish, not the seducer, but the partner in his act of shame; to strike, not the man whom you hate, but the woman whom you love, but who has so terribly wronged you——this demands a soul above all common thoughts, an iron nerve, a heart unyielding as the grave—"

"Mad'lin'!" shrieked Gilbert, as the blood congealed in his veins—"Strike Mad'lin'! Strike the girl—who only—to night—"

The words fell in broken accents; he could not go on. As though some spell had suddenly darkened his reason, he stood before the Invisible Head, pressing his hands to his forehead, and muttering in gasps—"Mad'lin'! Mad'lin'!"

And in answer, was heard the musical voice of the Invisible—

"Even now this girl, whom you so madly love, returns his kisses.

Yes, she suffers him to wind his arms about her neck, and twine his fingers in her flowing hair. At this moment, her eyes hazy, her bosom full with passion, she trembles at his touch, and whispers, ‘Gilbert I could not love, but thou hast won me to be thine—thine forever!’”

“Mad’lin’! Strike her—the girl who never harmed a livin’ thing, and wished good to all the world. Stab her for the villany of this Devil in human shape—”

“Go, miserable man, go to her chamber, in the Farm-House, not one mile from this hall. Look through the window; you can climb the chesnut tree, and see all that passes in her room. Go—see her pant and swell as her moist eyes are fixed upon her lover’s face; hear her words of passion, broken by the heavings of her naked bosom, and then refuse the knife, then say that you will not ascend the Grand Master’s throne!”

Gilbert’s hands fell from his brow, and he tottered toward the table. The knife, a long and serpentine blade, shapen like the dagger of the Malay, flashed brightly on the surface of the sombre mahogany.

“Which way—” he said in a whisper, that was scarcely audible—  
“Which way—do I pass—from this place?”

He seized the knife, his hand trembling in every nerve.

“First, you must swear an Oath, that you will appear in this hall again before the rising of the sun—”

“Quick! Your Oath—”

“That you will permit no one to see your face, that you will speak to no one, while absent on this errand—”

“Your Oath!” the knife, agitated by the tremor of his hand, clattered against the table.

“Kneel!”

With the knife in his hand, he knelt, heard the Oath, and repeated every syllable of its crowded imprecations. The lamp gave its faint beams to the scene. On one side of the table, the Invisible, shrouded in his shapeless dark robe, with a silent and motionless figure on either hand; before the table, kneeling on the stone floor, the huge form of the Woodsman, his head bowed, his hand, which grasped the knife, agitated by an unceasing motion, while his eyes shone with a mad glare, and his lips, compressed over his set teeth, indicated at once the firmness and the horror of his resolve.

“Brethren, blindfold the Candidate, and lead him forth from this cell to the house of Peter Dorfner!” said the Invisible.

With one movement the silent figures rose, and approached the kneeling Hunter, who still clasped the knife, and gazed upon the floor, muttering the name of the Orphan Girl.

It might be seen, even by the dim light, that one of these cowed forms was that of a stout, perchance Herculean man, while the other was spare and slender.



The stoutest of the twain bound a dark handkerchief tightly around the Hunter's eyes, and, at the same moment, lifted the cowl which veiled his features. A red round face, with hair and beard as white as snow, and bright eyes, almost buried among laughing wrinkles, glowed in the light, with the cowl encircling it, like a dark frame around a warmly colored picture.

It was the face of Peter Dorfner.

And, at the same instant that his laughing face, with a deadly malice sneering from its very laughter, was revealed, the other figure raised his cowl, and disclosed the sharp features of the Unknown, who had led Gilbert to this cell.

"We will conduct him to the scene—Most Venerable—and after he has passed the ordeal, bring him once more to the hall of the Supreme Lodge!" said Peter Dorfner, in a tone of lugubrious depth, while his eyes twinkled, and his lips grimaced in sneering laughter.

"Even so! 'Thou hast said it, and it shall be done!" added the slender gentleman, in a tone as guttural, and with the same grimace and sneer of his partner.

"Let it be done! Away! Three hours from this moment, I will await you!" And the Invisible waved his white hand.

The Hunter disappeared in the shadows of the cell, in the charge of the two disguised men; the sound of a door, quietly closed, was heard, followed by the echo of foot-tramps, and all was still.

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## CHAPTER TWELFTH.

### THE INVISIBLE HEAD OF THE ORDER.

THE Invisible was alone.

Alone, in the centre of the gloomy place, with the hanging lamp shining down over his cowed head and white hand, resting on the massive volume. Around him, all was gloom; the walls of the place were lost in the darkness.

The light only served to illumine that solitary figure, seated beside the table, with the cowl over his face, and the marble-like hand extended from the black robe. We may not see his face, but a deep sigh breaks on the silence, and the white hand trembles in every slender finger.

And while the hour passed, this unknown being, shrouded not only in his cowl and robe, but in the shadow and secrecy of the cell, which was sunken in the bosom of the hill, remained seated by the table, under the light of the hanging lamp, with his pale hand placed upon the Book.

And all the while, he talked aloud, as though conversing with his own soul, in the words of audible language.

"Fools! They pretend to sneer while they bind the Initiate's eyes, and laugh in scorn as they lead him to his work. They affect to despise this Organization, which they think is known to them in all its complications of Mystery and Power! And all the while, the humblest Initiate of the humblest Lodge, is not more the dupe of the Master of that Lodge, than Peter Dorfner and his friend are mine. Yet, they sneer and grimace, ha, ha! They fancy that they share my power, and partake with me, in a perfect knowledge of the incredible Machinery of the Order. They, indeed! it is a pitiable delusion. Both stained with cowardly crimes, both urging the Woodsman to this deed, because the *life* of Madeline may be their *death*, while I, in the rough granite of that rude Hunter's soul, already can trace the outlines of a Man of Genius.

"In my hands, he will control the Order on this Continent; in my hands he will go forth to his great work, prepared for every extremity, by *this night's trial*, which will cut him off forever from all sympathy or fellowship with Man.

"And yet they dream—those creatures of an hour, who have no thought beyond the gratification of an appetite, or the gorging of an insatiate avarice—that THE ORDER is but a cunning trick, invented yesterday, to cheat and bewilder baser men than themselves!

"That Order has flourished for thousands of years, its very name unknown to history, while its symbols—the Altar, the Ark, the Urn—have been stolen by all forms of religion, and adapted to the childish mummeries of all shapes of Secret Organization.

"Far—far back into the Night of Ages, we can trace the Order. It arose in the dawn of the World, when Man, putting on the name of Priest or King, first began to crush his Brother. Back, farther than the era of Babel's Tower, back even farther than the Deluge, even into those dim ages, whose memory is now called a fable, we may surely trace the Great Secret Order.

"At first, it was, in a word, the expression of Natural Religion—which had been lost among Altars and Thrones—by the multitude of Mankind, in the forms and with the solemnities of symbolic worship. A symbol was the earliest form of an Idea, and therefore, the symbols of THE ORDER are few, distinct and natural. They address themselves alike to the civilized man and the savage who is only one grade above the brute. They have been received alike by the Egyptian among his pyramids, by the polished Grecian under the clear skies and by the waveless seas of his

beloved clime, by the warlike and practical Roman, the half-naked Briton in his Druid rites, and the Hindoo, entangled among the mazes of *castes*, and ridden to the dust by a ferocious Religion.

"All ages, all nations have known this ORDER. Moulded anew by the intellect of Moses, it appeared in the elaborate ceremonial of the Jewish Religion; to his People of a later day, in the apparently unintelligible dreams of the Cabalists. The Greek beheld it in the mysteries called Eleusinian; its rites were observed in the camp of the Romans; it became manifested to Europe in the Middle Ages, under the form of Chivalry, and now, in Europe, in the year 1774, it is called MASONRY; a ridiculous Fable of Solomon and Hiram takes the place of the Great Truths of the Order; and its simplicity of form and serene grandeur of ceremonial, are lost in a maze of childish observances.

"Shall I not revive the Order, and bid it live again in a stronger and bolder life than ever? For Good or for Evil?

"Behold the Eternal Wisdom manifested in its laws and ritual! This Grand Master, who now awaits his doom in the next chamber, did not dream, one hour ago, that there was such a Power in the world as the Supreme Lodge. Yet, at his Initiation, he had sworn fealty to that Lodge; he had bound himself to recognise it, when it appeared in a certain form, and by a minutely described symbol, and to-night he beholds the form and the symbol for the first time. At first, he hesitates; but, bewildered by *the conception of a secret and INCOMPREHENSIBLE POWER, beyond and above him*, he yields like a slave to the master's rod.

"And this band of Pirates and Robbers—not only the Pirates of the sea, but of the counting-house; not merely the Robbers of the highway, but of the desk and counter—become subject to my control. I hold their immense organization in the palm of my hand."

The Invisible stretched forth his white hand, and the light revealed his eyes, dilating with inexplicable emotion.

"Shall it be for Good?" his voice broke in musical cadence upon the breathless stillness of the cell—"or for Evil?"

His head drooped; once more his cheeks, unnaturally pale, rested within his hands, while his eyes, almost shadowed by his hair, which fell over his projecting forehead, shone with a fixed and dazzling light.

In this posture, without a word or gesture, to indicate that there was life or thought in him, he remained for the space of an hour.

No human hand may dare to picture the dark wilderness of his thoughts.



## CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

## THE ANCIENT COIN.

MADELINE !

The moon gleams through the narrow window, whose white curtains are turned aside from the small panes, framed in lead, and shining over the dark coverlet of the bed, discloses the snowy form reposing in its centre.

It is by no means a spacious room, nor are the walls concealed by rich purple tapestry, nor do the creations of the painter's soul glow in the moonlight, from frames profuse in gilding and decked with elaborate carvings. The floor is bare; the walls covered with panels of dark oak; two windows give light to the narrow apartment, one looking to the west and the other to the south. Between these windows, in the corner, stands a small bed; two or three quaint chairs, and a walnut dressing-bureau, surmounted by an oval mirror, complete the scanty furniture of the room.

And it is a very pleasant thing to see the moonlight gushing over the dark coverlet from the southern window. While all is dreary winter, white snow-drifts, and leafless woods, and cloudless sky without; while, from the room below, echo the sounds of the midnight carouse, here, in the Maiden's bed-chamber, all is silent, and the only light that comes to bless her slumbering form, is the clear moonshine, gushing through the narrow window-pane.

She rests upon the bed, her form enveloped in the folds of a white garment, which, covering her arms with its loose sleeves, and her head with something like a hood or cowl, suffers her clasped hands, and face with the brown hair twining round its warm cheeks, to be visible. But the moonlight comes lovingly to bless her slumbering form, and in its pale glow, she seems not a living woman, but resembles the form of a dead Nun, laid upon her sinless couch, with every limb and feature composed in the sleep of death.

The shadows and the moonbeams struggle for the mastery, in the dim and narrow room; now the light glares on the mirror and widens upon the bed. The tread of the dancers, the mad music of the revel, echo from the room beneath, but still she slumbers, her virgin face looking very pure and altogether loveable, as the white hood and brown tresses contrast with her dark brows, delicately defined eyelashes, warm lips and rosy cheeks.

And the clasped hands gently rise and as gently fall, moved by the regular pulsations of her virgin breast.

As she slumbers, her lips move, and the silence is broken by an incoherent ejaculation.

"It is so beautiful! \* \* \* And thou art indeed the Lord of these valleys—\* \* \* this gloomy hall where we stand, looking forth upon the field and forest, the lake and river, smiling in the summer sun, is thine!"

Strange dream, that speaks altogether of lordly halls, and magnificent hills and valleys, with no shadow to dim the sunshine, no cloud to darken the brightness of the Future

"Madeline!"

The rays of a lamp fell softly over the face of the sleeping girl, and a countenance, almost deformed by the struggle of contending passions, looked in upon her slumber.

It was the young stranger, attired in the gray surtout, with curls of brown hair clustering around his white forehead. Lamp in hand, he had crossed the threshold with the stealthy footstep of a man conscious of a Guilty Thought; he had closed and bolted the door, drawn the curtains over the southern window, and now stood by the couch,—alone with his sleeping victim.

"Madeline!"

It was spoken in a whisper deepened by passion, but the orphan girl, wrapped in her dreams, did not hear the voice that uttered her name.

Turning in her slumber, she rested her cheek upon her right arm, and her face was beneath the gaze of the intruder. Like a slumbering nun in her white garment and hood, she lay before him, a soft flush stealing over her clear brown cheek, her eyelids moving gently as their fringes shone with moisture, her lips parting until the ivory teeth shone through their glowing red.

He laid his hand upon her arm, and there was a sad look of determined passion on his handsome face, as he heard the sleeper murmur his name in her dreams.

With his hand grasping her arm, the enticing loveliness of her face glowing in the light, he turned his gaze away, and his eye wandered to the bolted door. It was yet time to relent; he might cross that threshold in a moment, and the sleeping girl would be saved.

Ah, that some good Angel, whose solemn care it is to watch over the sleep of child-like maidenhood, had warned him back; and in that moment when he paused in trembling suspense, even beside the bed, had guided his footsteps from the room, and from the home of the Orphan Girl!

"But no! The world would laugh when it heard the story—even Jacopo would jeer! She loves me, and is already mine; for even in her dreams she speaks my name!"

In silence he surveyed the sleeping girl, as the light fell in mild radiance over her face.

"An hour! only an hour! And yet a great many things may be done in an hour!"

His hand pressed her bared arm; his fingers encountered a stray tress of her brown hair.

"Hah! She wakes—she will utter a shriek as she beholds me—all is lost!"

While John stood spell-bound, unable to utter a word, the young girl started up into a sitting posture, her feet hanging over the side of the bed, her hands slightly clasped, and resting upon the white folds of her dress.

Her eyes unclosed. John uttered an involuntary cry of terror; for their light was unnatural and glassy; they did not look into his handsome face with the impetuous glance of voluptuous impulse, or the moist tenderness of powerless passion but glared upon him with the cold stare of death.

"The potion has killed her—I am guilty—" faltered the young man, unable to turn his glance away from those glaring eyes.

It was with a feeling of unutterable surprise, mingled with a terror that chilled every vein, and made his heart beat with a sluggish and painful pulsation, that the Unknown heard the first words which came from the lips of the Orphan Madeline.

"Reginald Lyndulfe!" she uttered, in a voice of unnatural intonation.

The face of John expressed the very extremity of apathetic wonder.

"My name!"

The Maiden, sitting on the edge of the bed, her gently clasped hands resting on her dress, the light shining full upon her eyes, whispered, still in that voice, unnatural as her glassy stare—

"Reginald Lyndulfe! A great lord, the son of a lord, he comes to this forest home, eager to win a noble victory. With soft words and gentle smiles, eyes whose glances thrill, and tones whose music maddens, he comes to the home of the poor Orphan Girl, and comes to win her from purity and innocence, into pollution and shame. It is a noble deed for one so noble and fair to look upon! And the poor girl, sitting upon her virgin couch, her senses wrapped in the delirium of an unknown poison, speaks these words in the ears of Reginald, Lord of Lyndulfe, and feels that in a moment she will wake from her dream—only awake to forget the teachings of that dream—only awake to be more completely in her Seducer's power!"

The young man stood beside the bed, the light in his hand, but without speech or motion. The ruddy hue of health had passed from his face; his dark blue eyes grew large and wild; an idiotic smile agitated his nether lip.

He could not speak; he could not find in his heart the word which was to answer these incredible words of the Somnambulist, nor had he the physical power to frame an audible sound.



"Yes, Reginald—" she said, her large eyes yet veiled by that deathly glassiness—"it is true. In this strange sleep I know you, know your real name, and know your secret purposes. It is also true, that in a moment I will awake from this dream—wonder to find you here, in my chamber,—listen to your words, and yield to their deceit."

Not one line of her features moved; not a tremor of the expanded lid, nor a smile of the set lips, gave to the Somnambulist the appearance of life. She looked like a beautiful image of Death, freshly gathered from the coffin; and yet her beauty was more terrible to behold than the most loathsome skull or skeleton of the charnel-house.

Spell-bound, unable to advance or recede, John stood by the bed, the arm which extended the lamp, stiff and rigid as an arm of iron. He felt the cold damps upon his forehead; he could not look to the right or the left; the glassy eyes of Madeline enchained him, and held him motionless and dumb.

The wind howled dismally without; he heard it, and fancied it was some strange funeral knell, tolling from an unearthly bell, rung by demon hands.

Even as the grotesque conceit flashed over his bewildered brain, there came, crowding together, a mass of incoherent thoughts:

"The drug has the influence of some devil's spell \* \* \* It has destroyed her reason \* \* \* It is not her voice which I hear, but the voice of a spirit \* \* \* So pale, so beautiful, so like a dead Maiden half-restored to life!"

Thoughts like these crowded over his brain, but he could not speak a word.

She rose from her bed. With a footstep that seemed not to touch the floor, but to glide over it, like the footstep of a spiritual thing, she passed the form of the young man, her hands extended, and her glassy eyes fixed on the vacant air.

"Here—on this very spot where now I stand—my Mother stood!"

He heard the voice, but could not turn and look upon her. It seemed as though the same spell which wrapped her senses in this delirium, filled his veins with ice.

"Here she stood, and begged for mercy! 'Spare me!—if not for the sake of God, if not for the sake of mercy, for the sake of my unborn child!' And yet they killed her—"

Her voice, hollow and unnatural as it was, thrilled with a more ghost-like accent, as she said these words:

"And yet they killed her! Upon this floor, ere the first cry of her babe had melted on her ears, ere she had seen the face of that new-born child, they murdered her, in her very anguish and travail!—Mother, your robes are very white, but there is blood upon their whiteness. Mother, your face is very fair, but there is the stain of blood upon it, too;—blood on the brow and lip, blood everywhere!"

Still, with the light shining over the untenanted bed, the young man stood there, conscious that the Orphan Girl was near him, but unable to turn and gaze upon her deathly eyes, although her voice penetrated his very blood.

"In a moment, Mother—" he heard her voice, as, in that slow, measured tone, she spoke—"your daughter will kneel upon this very spot, and plead, not for her life, but for her honor. Plead, not with her Murderer, but with her Seducer. And, like you, Mother, she will pray to an ear that is brass, a heart that is stone!"

The light, shining over the young man's shoulder, lighting up his graceful form and livid face, also shone upon the white image at his back, and imparted a faint glow to the pale face and motionless eyeballs.

How shall we explain this scene? This Orphan Girl, with her blood wrapped in a spectral somnambulism,—chilled at its fountains,—her bosom pulseless, her eye glassy—while her soul seems to burst into a new life,—a life at once conscious of the unknown Past and the unknown Future? Shall we say that all this was the work of the drug administered not an hour ago, or the result of witchcraft? Or shall we boldly imagine that it is not the soul of the Orphan Girl which speaks from her lips, but that some spiritual Presence from the Other World now fills her bosom?

Let us look round the walks of our everyday life, and explain the thousand incidents, which to us appear so dark and inexplicable. Let us summon to our aid all the old-time wisdom which was called Magic, or the modern Philosophy, which bears the name of Magnetism. Where will our explanations end? Where they began. We can only record the facts—or what to us appear like facts;—the explanation is reserved for another and more intelligent age of the world, perchance for another and brighter state of being.

So, in relation to this incredible scene, now before us, we can only picture, not explain. Perchance, in future pages of this history, we may learn the mystery of poor Madeline's life.

Suddenly a sound, as of a corse hurled fiercely from its coffin—dashed rudely on the hard floor—broke the stupor which paralyzed the senses of the stranger. Distinctly he heard that sound—listened with hushed breath for the voice of Madeline—all was still.

The blood flowed freely again; the strange terror which had held him speechless was gone; he could speak, but could not muster courage to turn himself, and look upon the maiden.

"Ah—this is some devil's wizard-craft! Jacopo! Jacopo! You shall pay dearly for this!"

He turned—

At his feet, no longer pale and spectral, but throbbing and panting, as with the first pulses of a new life, was stretched the Maiden Madeline, her cheeks glowing redly against the brown curls and the white hood; her eyelids, half-unclosed, gleaming with the moist radiance which they could not altogether veil.

"She awakes from this wizard spell—" faltered John, or Reginald, as you may choose to designate him.

Bending over her, light in hand, he soon forgot all his terrors—soon forgot the pale, glassy-eyed maiden, in that half-slumbering image of voluptuous loveliness.

"Madeline!" he softly said, while his cheek was flushed, his deep blue eye, warm and passionate in its light—"Awake! It is I—it is your—"

Lover? He could not speak the word; and as for "Husband," it only rose before him coupled with the sneer of the—World.

"Marry her!" Even as she bloomed beneath his gaze, trembling softly into a warm and passionate life, a sneer curled his lip—"Reginald of Lyndulfe, and the Peasant Girl of Wissahikon! The world will forgive the—the outrage, but a marriage—never!"

Merrily from the room below came the sounds of the midnight revel; sad and knell-like the wind howled through the glen of Wissahikon; but the young man, bending over the half-conscious girl, did not heed the echo of the dancers' tread, nor mark the roaring of the blast.

His gaze was centred upon her eyes, shining dimly through their half closed lids; he seemed to gloat upon the freshness of her parted lips, the glowing warmth of her cheeks.

The bosom which, only a moment past, had rested beneath the white robe, like a dead bosom in its shroud, now began to rise and swell. She suddenly stretched forth her arms—with eyes wide open, glared wildly about her—started to her feet, and shrunk away from the Stranger, as though his very gaze filled her with indefinable anguish.

"You here—in my chamber—at this lone hour!—"

She faltered the words, and, joining her hands, stood in her white robe before this unknown man, her hair coursing freely over her neck and shoulders.

"Madeline, you do not love me," he slowly uttered, his voice low and distinct, his gaze centred upon her face.

"Ah—it is some dream. It cannot be. You—you would not—could not be so base! To pass the threshold of my chamber at the dead hour of night—to whisper words of love to a poor forest girl, whose faith is pledged to another. Ah—it is not your voice that I hear."

Without removing his gaze, the young man raised his clasped hands, and, in a voice that was almost hallowed by the deep reverence which was mingled with its passion, he continued:

"Madeline, will you listen to me? Hear me, before you reject my



suit with scorn. Do not condemn me unheard. Oh, when I stand thus before you, and feel that we are indeed alone with each other, shut out from all the world, and think how often I have longed, prayed for this moment, I could kneel at your feet and thank——”

He covered his face with his hands. Did he fear to complete the sentence?—was he afraid to take the name of God upon his lips?

“Madeline, will you listen to me?” he cried, starting forward, his hands outstretched, his voice broken by emotion. She could see his chest heave and swell beneath the coarse garb that covered it; and his manly face, flushed by passion, and lighted by earnest eyes, seemed to impress her with an emotion as wild and singular as his own.

“John——” she muttered, sinking into a chair beside the bed, as though her strength had failed her—“You know that I am the plighted Wife of Gilbert Morgan. When last we met, I told you the story of my life. Depart—leave me—leave me—I cannot——”

Her words were incoherent, her accents tremulous and broken. As the blushes warmed over her brown cheek, she absently tossed the tresses of her hair aside from her face, and cast her eyes—shining with moisture—to the floor.

“You cannot love him!” cried the young man—“That is it, Madeline. Nay, do not attempt a denial. Your own heart confirms my words.”

Madeline raised her eyes—her face was very pale, her voice earnest though tremulous as she spoke:

“Only a month ago, beneath the withered chesnut tree that stands near the water-side, I first beheld you, first listened to your voice. That hour brought woe and madness to me! Before I saw you, my life was calm—thoughtless—but it was happy. An humble peasant girl, I had been reared in these solitudes; cherished beneath the roof which now shelters us; my only adviser, a rude Indian man, who, but an hour ago, warned me to fear you, John; aye, to dread you as the Manitto of Evil. There was another friend—a man, now aged, who dwells in the Monastery up the stream, and who, from the hour of earliest childhood, unclosed to my eyes the pages of the Bible, the knowledge of the world’s past history. It was Father Luke, of the Wissahikon Monastery, who taught the friendless Orphan Girl the speech of the great world, and the lessons of that holy Religion which says to all of us, even to the poorest and the humblest—‘There is a God, and he is our Father. There is another World, a better and a brighter world, and it shall be our Home, when our bones are dust.’”

She paused, her pale cheek glowing into sudden life, her eyes gleaming, and a look of almost hallowed purity trembling over the lineaments of her face.

“And Father Luke has warned me, John,” she said, “warned me to fear you as I would fear the Enemy of Mankind!”

"Madeline, it is true that I have only known your name for a brief month. It is true that your love dawned suddenly upon my soul. But since the hour when I first saw you, I have not been the master of my own fate. For love of you, Madeline, I would sacrifice all that is dear to me in the world; in your presence alone I exist; away from your side, my life is dark—Oh, dark—a dreary waste, without a flower; a gloomy night without a star! Listen to me, Madeline—instead of being as I am, but the poor clerk of a wealthy Merchant, were I the titled heir of some princely estate, I would fling title and lands at your feet, and be proud to call the humble girl of Wissahikon my bride."

Seated on the chair beside the bed, her flushed cheek relieved by the brown hair, which swept freely from the folds of the white hood, over her shoulders, Madeline looked up into the face of her lover, with a sensation of peculiar character. It was not love, it was not fear. He stood some paces from her side, in the centre of the floor, the light which he held disclosing his manly face encircled by curls of waving brown hair, his muscular and agile form enveloped in the suit of coarse cloth, which, buttoned to the throat, relieved his countenance, and displayed the bold outline of his chest, the sinewy proportions of his arms.

"It may not be," she said, in a voice almost inaudible—"Our paths in this world lie apart. I am the plighted Wife of another. You—you—are unknown to me. Your very name—"

She cast her eyes on the floor; brighter and deeper the blushes glowed over her cheek.

John placed the lamp upon a small table of unpainted pine, which stood near the bed. Then, seating himself upon the edge of that couch, he took the hand which she had not the power to withdraw. Her eyes were downcast, but he could feel the hand which he clasped grow cold as ice, and the tremulous motion of her white robe marked the throbbing of her bosom.

"Madeline—" he said, in a voice which, low and faltering in its accents, at once enchained the heart of the poor girl—"I have a few words to say to you. You will listen to me—listen in silence and in patience; for when those words are said, I will leave you for ever."

She did not answer; with her eyes downcast, and her bosom swelling with an emotion that was denied the blessing of speech, she felt the hand of this unknown man pressing her own, and could not withdraw her hand from his grasp.

"You have read of other lands, Madeline. Have you not, in some old book of romance, read a story something like this?—Once, in a wild forest, dwelt a beautiful girl, who did not know that she was beautiful, though the stream told it to her, as her face was reflected in its clear waves; and the wild rose which bloomed in her path, seemed pale and withered, when compared with the warm hue of her cheek, the moist

ripeness of her lips. It was in England, Madeline, in some shadowy valley of a Yorkshire forest, that this orphan girl dwelt ; and many hundred years have passed since the dust was laid upon her bosom—”

As if absorbed in the memories of his narrative, Reginald pressed the hand which trembled in his grasp, and toyed absently with her flowing hair.

“ One day, as, bending over the waves, she saw her face smiling upon her, in all its youth, hallowed by the innocence of a stainless heart, there came suddenly to her side, an unknown man, dressed in the garb of a peasant. At once the forest girl loved him, ay, as though some spell had won her heart, she could not look into his face without emotion ; nor hear his voice without trembling. She loved him, from the very moment when, gazing in the stream, she saw his face reflected beside her own. Loved him with a love that was not without a strange and indefinable fear.”

Madeline shuddered. Something there was in the story of Reginald that penetrated her heart with an indefinable agitation.

“ And yet he was unknown to her. She was even ignorant of his name.”

The young girl raised her eyes, and for an instant glanced upon her lover’s handsome face. Again an involuntary shudder shook her form.

“ For him, Madeline, this unknown man, she forsook her wild-wood valley ; she followed his fate into the great world. She forsook, for him, those dear old woods, in whose tranquil solitudes her form had ripened into beauty ; forsook the calm waters which had reflected her virgin face ; forsook all the peace and quiet of her lonely life, and went forth, with the unknown stranger, into the unknown world.”

Madeline’s head drooped slowly on her bosom ; Reginald could not read the expression of her face, nor mark her tears, but he heard her gasping breath, he felt that gently tremulous hand.

“ They wandered forth together—” whispered Madeline.

“ Yes, unblessed by priestly rites ; they went on their way, hand linked in hand, and hearts hallowed in the bond of a stainless love. One day, Madeline, just as the sun was setting, they stood together on the summit of a hill, the dusk woods stretching toward the west, while in the east, centred on the wide sweep of a grassy lawn, arose an ancient castle, with the banners of a lordly race floating from its loftiest tower, and strains of music, rich, deep, festival music, gushing from its vine-clad casements. Around that noble hall, Madeline, invested as it was with all the outward indications of rank and wealth, bands of marriage guests were scattered, their gay costumes glittering from the verdure of the lawn. They awaited the return of the lord of this fair domain. In some far land, he had taken to himself a bride. Whether rich or poor, young or old, they knew not ; but word had been received that he would return to his castle, at the hour of sunset, with this unknown wife on his arm.”



The story seemed to absorb the very soul of the Orphan Girl. Her bosom fluttering, her face averted, she surrendered her hand, her arm, to the grasp of Reginald, and awaited in undisguised suspense the conclusion of the old-time Legend.

"The peasant girl, standing on the hill-top—her rudely clad lover by her side, beheld this scene, as the soft warmth of the summer evening invested her face with new loveliness.

"It is indeed beautiful!" she said, her eyes enchained by the scene which stretched beneath her feet—"Hark! how the music, softened by distance, comes gently over the lawn!"

"Her lover did not answer her. His face, not altogether hideous or wrinkled, you may be sure, although his rough garb indicated a life of poverty and want,—his face, I say, was shadowed by an emotion which the peasant girl could not comprehend. There was a sad look upon his brow, but around his lips, a smile hung trembling;—it was as though joy and sorrow contended for the mastery on the lines of his countenance. He did not speak to her—"

"He did not speak to her—" echoed Madeline, without seeming conscious of the words.

"No, Madeline; but led her gently down the hill-side. Through the lofty gates which stood by the roadside, they went together, she trembling nearer to him, afraid, in her peasant garb, of all this music and splendor. He took her silently by the hand, and as she clung closer to his side, they passed over the lawn, and through the marriage guests, in their glittering costumes, and up the great steps of the ancient castle, where a Priest, in the robes of his solemn office, awaited the coming of the young Lord and his Bride."

"Let us depart," she faltered—"This is no place for us. We are but poor and humble; these great people, so richly arrayed, look with scorn upon our mean attire.—"

"And she buried her head upon his breast, clinging to his arms for support, as her long hair waved over his shoulders.

"Look up," cried her lover, speaking the name of his Peasant Bride, "and behold our home!"

"Need I pursue the story, Madeline? Need I tell to you the wonder and the joy which covered the face of the Peasant Girl with new beauty, as she heard her unknown Lover addressed by his Lordly title, and felt her footstep press the threshold of her princely home?"

His voice deepened by emotion, his hand entwined about her neck, her cheek drooping nearer to his own, his eyes devoured the warm loveliness of her face, which seemed to ripen into a more luxuriant beauty beneath his gaze. She trembled at his touch; her downcast eyes were filled with tears.

"It is a beautiful dream—" she faltered.

"No dream, Madeline, no dream! It is truth, all truth."

"Truth!" She lifted her gaze, and beheld his earnest face—"What mean you?"

"Pardon the deception, Madeline. I said that this maiden lived in a valley of England, in the ages long since past. She does dwell in a beautiful valley; her own form the incarnation of all that is beautiful in cloudless skies, or unruffled waves, or the deep sile<sup>at</sup> night, when the blue heaven is set with countless stars. It is the valley of the Wissahikon; and here, at her feet, behold her lover in his rough peasant garb!"

He sunk beside her, clasping her hands within his own.

"No peasant, but the heir of a lordly line. Yes, Madeline, Reginald, Lord of Lyndulfe, asks your love, and beseeches the Orphan Girl of Wissahikon to become his bride."

"Reginald of Lyndulfe!" murmured Madeline, and her eyes, even amid their tears, assumed the glassy appearance which had veiled their brightness but a few moments before. "I have heard that name——"

With her hands upon her forehead, she seemed absorbed in some painful memory. Meanwhile, Reginald, clutching her robe with a tremulous grasp—passion in his flashing eyes, his breast heaving violently, his parted lips and brow deformed by swollen veins—looked up into her half-veiled face, as he whispered once more the frenzied request.

"Be mine, Madeline! Be mine—rank—power——" his voice was broken, his words incoherent.

No answer came from the lips of the forest girl. While her hands veiled her eyes, her cheek became death-like and crimson by turns, and the folds of her robe, or garment, call it as you will, were violently agitated by the impetuous swelling of her bosom.

It was the decisive moment of her fate. She could not speak a word in answer; but, as if enveloped by the frenzies of a dream, she felt his arms encircle her waist, and could not resist their pressure. She felt his burning kiss upon her lip, and could not turn her face away. His hand toyed with the loose tresses of her hair—his gloating eye surveyed the half-revealed whiteness of her bosom; she trembled in his embrace, and, unable to move, sank on his encircling arm, her eyes swimming in the light of powerless passion.

"Reginald——" she faltered, as though some memory had flashed upon her, like a lightning spark from a midnight cloud—"On this very spot—eighteen years ago—My Mother—pleaded for her life—do not—do not—destroy the honor of her child!"

The kiss of the lover drowned the maiden's earnest words.

The sound of the dance, the echo of song had died away. All was silent in the room below—a deathly stillness reigned throughout the farmhouse. There was no sudden blast of wind, howling through the gorge of Wissahikon, to break the midnight quiet of the scene. No voice was

heard to warn the Seducer back in his career of treachery ; in his arms, blushing and powerless, the maiden hung, her lips pressed again and again by his guilty kiss.

But, from the withered chesnut tree, whose leafless branches touched the panes of the western window, a face distorted by agony more terrible than death, was gazing on the Maiden's peril with glaring eyes.

"Mad'lin' !" exclaimed a rough voice,—but it did not reach the ears of the girl, nor excite for an instant the attention of Reginald Lyndulfe.

And on the outer side of the bolted door, a crouching figure bent in the darkness, his ear laid against the panels, as the words of the Tempter broke the deathly stillness.

"She yields !" muttered the tremulous voice of an aged man—"In a moment, all is lost—Ah ! The fiend has mocked me !"

And while the figure of Gilbert, revealed by the cold moonlight, was seen upon the limbs of the chesnut tree, his face against the window frame, the knife shining in his hand—while the old man, enshrouded in the darkness of the passage, listened for the fatal word which was to seal the maiden's shame, Reginald of Lyndulfe, pressing his lips to the burning cheek of Madeline, gathered her closer to his breast.

"Come ! Fly with me to night—this hour—this moment——"

Frenzied by his guilty passion, he said these words, and did not feel that the Lie of his heart was written upon his forehead, darkened by the swollen veins.

"Mercy ! I am but a poor weak girl—alone in the world——"

With a last effort, she endeavored to free her lip from his kiss, her waist from his tightening arm. The effort was vain. Her loosened hair floated over his shoulders, as his kisses burned her lips.

Gilbert, clinging to the withered limb, beheld the flushed face of Reginald, and laid one hand upon the sash of the narrow window. His face, pressed against the glass, was hideous with hatred and despair. One blow of his sturdy arm, and the sash would fall before him ; with his right hand he clutched the knife.

"Warm kisses——" Gilbert muttered through his set teeth—"Hah ! There is a gay dress beneath your coarse gray coat—a spangled dress of silk and diamonds. By \* \* \* ! I'll make it gayer and brighter with your——"

The Huntsman, laying one hand upon the sash, grasping the knife with the other, his eye dilating as it was rivetted by the scene within the chamber, felt the withered limb bend beneath him. With an oath, he endeavored to grasp a higher branch of the tree, but the knife fell from his hand, as the withered limb, with a sudden crash, snapped under his weight.

He fell ; the knife clattered upon a heavy mass of granite at the foot of



the tree. For an instant the Huntsman saw nothing but a vague blank, heard nothing but the echo of the snapping branch. When he recovered his consciousness, he found himself hanging by the arms to the lowest limb of the huge chesnut, his feet dangling near the earth. Above him shone the window of Madeline's room.

"Curses on it! I'm crazy, I believe! To lose my hold at sich a moment! *They* are watchin' me, too—watchin' from yonder thicket. But it does not need their watchin' to make me go forrad *now*."

Releasing his hold, he fell on his feet, picked the knife from the stone, and, placing it between his teeth, began to ascend the tree. Once, as he clomb from limb to limb, he turned his head over his shoulder. Through the clear heavens the moon was shining brightly. The farm-house, the thicket near, and the distant woods, were darkly contrasted with the glittering waste of pure white snow.

"They watch me from the thicket!" muttered Gilbert, as he sprang upon a limb, which commanded a view of the interior of Madeline's chamber. As the stout Huntsman, whose brain was somewhat bewildered by the events of this crowded night, looked through the window panes, an oath escaped from his lips.

He saw that chamber by the rays of the lamp, the bed yet bearing the impress of the maiden's form, the quaint, old-fashioned furniture, the dressing-bureau, and the door which led into the corridor of the farm-house.

But neither Madeline—nor her seducer were visible.

From the limb—on which Gilbert poised his weight, grasping a branch above him—to the window, was a dangerous leap, but he did not pause to think. With a desperate bound he reached the window, dashed the sash before him—it hung on hinges and opened like a door—and in an instant stood in the centre of the chamber, beside the maiden's bed.

All was silent there.

"They've gone together—she has fled with him—" the features of the Hunter, distorted by rage, became softened suddenly by a look of rude but unutterable anguish. "Mad'lin'! This is a little too hard to bear. So good and pure as you was, that an angel couldn't scarcely be a better thing—Now—in a few hours—all your goodness gone——"

He clenched the knife, and gazed wildly round the chamber.

"Yer Bible's thar, gal—and you could do it! Leave the man that 'ud 'a torn his heart into splinters for you——But it's his work, his devil's tongue——"

He turned, and, with a cry of surprise mingled with hatred, beheld that the door leading into the corridor was open.

"I'll follow you, my fine feller, and paint yer spangled feathers with yer blood!"

As he rushed to the door, his purpose—it was Murder—written on his

face, a sound that was scarcely audible, so low, and like the echo of a rustling leaf, arrested his footsteps.

Again he turned, and, near the foot of the bed, beheld the unconscious form of Madeline. She was stretched upon the floor; her eyes were closed; her arms lay stiffened by her side. The dress had been torn from her bosom by a rude grasp; upon those globes, whose veins, like threads of azure, were traced beneath the transparent skin, the livid print of a brutal hand was visible.

Gilbert knelt beside her. His face was from the light, which streamed over the back of his head, glowing upon his chesnut curls. The agony that convulsed his features was lost in the shadow.

No groan came from his compressed lips; perchance the light of contending love and hatred grew deeper and wilder in his eyes, but not a sound betrayed his agony.

"Beautiful gal, with yer brown hair about yer pale face, an' that bosom, which, as much as I loved you, and as often as you had said you'd be my wife, I never yit dared to touch, or look upon—an' that bosom bare, with the print of his hand upon it. Beautiful! An Angel fresh from 'tother world couldn't be purtier; but—"

The knife which he grasped, rested its shining point upon the floor. At once the memory of his strange mission came over the hunter—he trembled like a man who beholds some horrible Apparition rising by his bed at dead of night.

"She don't breathe. It's likely that she's dead already. As it is, she'll only wake up to misery and shame——By \* \* \*, I think it 'ud be a blessed thing to kill her!"

The bosom moved — very slightly — with a pulsation as gentle as the motion of a feather, agitated by a sleeper's breath. And as it fluttered with that soft motion, Gilbert beheld a faded ribbon, wound about the neck of the insensible girl. To this ribbon was attached a small coin, which lay upon her breast, and rose with the almost imperceptible pulsation. The huntsman lifted her head, and took the ribbon from her neck. In the action his hand encountered her luxuriant tresses, and the strong man felt the tears start into his eyes. Not for the world, or the wealth of a thousand worlds, would he have touched that bosom.

"It was stainless once—pure as the drifted snow—now——"

Holding the small coin, or medal, toward the light, he endeavored in vain to decipher the strange figures which were inscribed upon its surface. The metal was gold; it was very bright, and worn smooth as glass, as by the pressure of countless hands.

"I can't read it, gal, but I'll take it as a memory of you——"

In silence he wound the ribbon round his neck, and then, with a quivering hand, placed the point of the knife upon her bosom.

"In the name of the Covenant——" he gasped, and at the same moment

the girl unclosed her eyes. She beheld that face, convulsed with agony, wet with tears; she felt the sharp point of the knife.

Behind the hunter, with a stealthy footstep, which he did not hear, came the bent figure of an old man, whose blue eyes shone with a cold, icy light, as he beheld the knife resting upon the beautiful bosom of Madeline.

"Gilbert!" even in that moment of half-consciousness she knew him.

Nearer stole the old man, his pale face writhing in every nerve.

"It ain't no use now, Mad'lin'—" said the Hunter, his face glooming with a profound despair—"It's too late!"

His hand was upon the hilt—and the blood started, as the point entered the white breast of Madeline.

A sound of half-suppressed laughter disturbed the silence, and in the door-way appeared the rotund form and white-bearded face of the jovial Peter Dorfner.

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## CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

### THE INSCRIPTION ON THE ANCIENT COIN.

"For Good or for Evil?" muttered the Unknown, whom we can only call by his own title—The Invisible Head of the Brotherhood.

His hour of silent thought was over; a slight flush warmed his features, as he glanced around the silent cell. The hanging lamp still cast its faint rays over the gloom, and lighted up that solitary figure seated by the table, his cheeks buried in his hands.

"A footstep—one only—is it the footstep of Gilbert Morgan? Does he return alone? Has he braved the peril of the Ordeal?"

While these thoughts, only half-spoken, occupied the mind of the Invisible, the footstep grew more distinct—a figure approached from the darkness of the cell—a clanging sound disturbed the stillness of the place.

A knife lay on the table, before the gaze of the Invisible.

At first, he did not notice the wretched man who stood before him, his muscular form agitated by an involuntary tremor, his gay apparel of green and gold torn and disordered. Nor did he remark the cadaverous face, whose livid cheeks only made the wild eyes and restless lips more painfully distinct.

His eyes rested upon the knife, as, grasping the hilt, he raised it in the light.



"It is well!"

The blade was red; it shone no longer; but, as the Invisible held it in his grasp, a blood-drop, oozing from the point, fell on the table.

"Is it done?—" he surveyed the horror-stricken features of the Hunter.

The wretched man made an effort to speak, but without success. The muscles of his throat writhed convulsively, his lips moved as if agitated by a spasm, but he could not utter a syllable.

He pointed to the knife, and laid his hand upon his heart. There was something impressive in his silence; something of fearful eloquence in his agitated face, and sunburnt hand, pressed forcibly upon his chest.

"I need not ask you; the Ordeal was fearful, but you have passed it like a Man. Yes, like a Brother of the Covenant."

"He has," said a voice, speaking from the dark recesses of the cell—"I saw him strike the blow."

"And I also beheld the knife as it pierced her bosom"—another voice was heard.

Shading his eyes with his hand, the Invisible gazed in the direction from whence these sounds proceeded, and beheld the rotund form of Peter Dorfner, with his slender companion by his side.

"Retire!" he said—"and at the proper signal, conduct the late Grand Master to this cell."

The echo of their footsteps presently died away.

It was with an expression of pity, imbibed by scorn, that the Invisible looked into the face of Gilbert Morgan.

"And so you buried your knife in her bosom? You loved her, too; loved her in a rude way, but with all your soul. Did your hand tremble, as your victim crouched at your feet, and saw the steel flash over her ere it fell?"

Gilbert did not speak. Trembling, pale, his hands hanging motionless by his side, he looked vacantly into the face of the Invisible.

"It seems to me that I can imagine the scene. You found her, with the kiss of her lover yet warm upon her lip. In her own chamber, with her attire disordered, and her cheek flushed with passion. There were bitter words between you—fierce reproaches on your part, sullen replies from her lips. Yet no impulse of love, no touch of compassion, held you back in your work of murder. She knelt to you—a very beautiful thing it must have been—a kneeling girl, with her brown hair floating over her bare bosom. 'Gilbert!' she cried, speaking in the same voice which not long ago thrilled your heart-strings. But there was no mercy in your eye—resolved to do the deed, you raised your arm, and mangled the bosom that heaved before you.—"

The hunter tottered backward, and, sinking on one knee, suffered his face to droop toward the floor.

The Invisible raised his hand to his forehead, and was silent for a moment.

"Yet let me ask another question. Was the girl who received her death at your hands a pure or a dishonored thing?"

Bending over the table, he saw the kneeling form rock to and fro, but received no answer to his question.

"Ah—I perceive the truth of this matter. She was dishonored—you could not have plunged your knife into a virgin heart."

Gilbert's face was lifted toward the light, every feature agitated by a speechless despair. Again his lips moved, but he could not frame a sound.

"Where did you leave the body?"

Tottering to his feet, the Hunter advanced one step forward, and flung his clenched hand upon the table.

"Look ye—" he cried, his voice husky and indistinct—"Isn't it enough that I've done your devil's work? Even if you are a born devil, you might have a little pity for me. You told me to kill her—I've done it. That is the knife, and here I am. If you've anythin' more for me to do, jest say it. After this night's work, I don't know the thing that I'm afeard to do. Speak out—speak out—"

"Where did you leave the body?" repeated the Invisible, waving his hand with a peculiar motion, as he fixed his eyes upon the huntsman's face.

As though that waving hand, those eyes, fired with peculiar light, had been the outward indications of a supernatural power, the Hunter's features became suddenly rigid, his eyes fixed and glassy, his form stiff and motionless.

Like a dead man placed in an erect posture, he stood beside the table, while the Invisible surveyed his stiffened form and rigid face, with a calm delight, or rather a look of smiling complacency.

"Where did you leave the body?"

The lips of the Hunter moved languidly, while every other feature was rigid as the features of the dead.

"In her own room—" said Gilbert, speaking no longer in his blunt woodsman's accent, but in a voice that seemed to indicate a man of education and refined manners. "In her own room, with her bosom covered with her blood, and her glassy eyes fixed upon the ceiling."

"Are you willing to obey me now—obey me in every command, without a look or gesture of disobedience?"

"I am!"

The Invisible knocked thrice upon the table with the hilt of the knife, and ere the sound had died away, the form of the Grand Master, clad in the glittering robes of his office, advanced from the shadows. His bronzed features were dimly discernible through the lace veil which flut-

tered from his forehead. As he came near, the Invisible drew the cowl over his face.

"Take the coronet from your brow."

The Grand Master lifted the coronet of golden leaves from his forehead, and with it the slender plume and white veil. His face was revealed. The features were not altogether unhandsome; their regular outlines, relieved by dark hair—powdered and curled after the fashion of the time—indicated a proud and sensual nature. But at this moment, the eyes shone wildly with terror, and the forehead was damp with moisture.

"What would you?" he exclaimed, in tones by no means calm or firm.

"Place the coronet upon the brow of the Grand Master Elect—" the white hand of the Invisible pointed toward Gilbert's rigid face.

It was with a look of terror that the deposed Grand Master obeyed. His terror was not without sufficient cause, for the glassy eyeballs and fixed features of Gilbert resembled the face of a corse. His hand trembled as he wound the golden leaves about the brown hair of the hunter, and arranged the plume over his forehead, and saw his ghostly face, but half-concealed by the veil.

The deposed Grand Master turned once more to the cowed figure.

"The Robe—" and again the white hand was stretched toward Gilbert's form.

There was a glance of sullen regret, a momentary flashing of the eye and curling of the lip, as the gorgeously arrayed personage heard this decided command.

"The Robe—" the voice of the Invisible was stern and penetrating.

The Grand Master seemed to hesitate, but in an instant stripping the purple garment, glittering with the dagger, the skull, the vine leaves, and other emblems, from his shoulders, his form was disclosed, attired in the costume of a man of the world. A wide-skirted coat, fringed with lace, silken vest and cambric ruffles—he was altogether an elegant and finished gentleman.

"Place it upon the shoulders of the Grand Master—"

No slave, crouching under fear of his master's lash, could have obeyed more readily than the deposed Grand Master, for he inserted Gilbert's arms in the flowing sleeves, and fastened the garment over his broad chest, without a word.

Gilbert stood arrayed in the robes of the Grand Master of the B. H. A. C., his rigid features seen—through the veil—with a half-distinctness, that only made them look more unnatural and death-like.

The late Grand Master, with the moisture starting from his forehead, every line of his face agitated by fear, awaited in sullen silence the commands of the Invisible.

"To-morrow morning a ship sails from the City, on a voyage to Canton. You will take passage on board of that ship, and——" he drew



a letter from his monkish gown—"obey the orders contained in this paper. You can now retire. Brethren—" looking toward the form of Dorfner and his companion—"I leave this man to your charge."

The deposed Grand Master turned, without a word, and disappeared in the shadows.

Once more the Invisible was alone with Gilbert Morgan.

"Cast your eye into the Hall of the Grand Lodge," said the cowed Figure—"What do you see and hear?"

This command seems like an idle mockery to us. For thick walls and dreary passages separate this cell from the Hall in which the Grand Lodge are assembled. Yet the answer of Gilbert, conveyed in the language of an educated man, was plain and to the point—

"The lights are burning fast toward their sockets. The Brothers look toward the door, and murmur the name of the Grand Master. They await his coming with feverish suspense. Stay! A Brother rises, and exclaims—Shall we not close this session of the Grand Lodge, without the presence of the Grand Master?"

"It is well—" and a smile stole over the face of the Invisible—"The fools of the world would call this Magic, or, perchance, doubt that it ever occurred. So, three hundred years, or scarce three hundred years ago, it was Sorcery on the part of Galileo to say that the earth moved round the sun. That Sorcery is now become Science. And ere an hundred years, this *Magic*, which enables me to substitute my will for the will of this rude man,—in a word, to *fill his brain with my soul*, will be no longer the wisdom of the devil, but the system of an acknowledged Science. So goes the world!"

It was almost demoniac in its scorn—the cold smile which agitated the face of the Invisible.

"You will go without delay to the Hall of the Grand Lodge," he said, fixing his dazzling eyes upon the face of the Hunter, "and speak the words that I will utter to your heart."

Attired in the robes of his office, dazzling from head to foot in the paraphernalia of the Order, Gilbert turned away, and, with measured steps, departed into the shadows. Ere a moment was gone, the echo of his footsteps had ceased to disturb the silence.

The Invisible laid his white hand upon the heavy volume which rested upon the table, as he pushed the cowl back from his forehead.

"They are all here—" he muttered, as he unclosed the volume—"a brave and bloody band, whose deeds extend over the history of two centuries. Some died in their peaceful beds, encircled by weeping grandchildren—others on the bloody deck, amid the smoke and flame of carnage—this rude fellow on Tyburn tree, and his comrade at the yard-arm of one of his Majesty's ships-of-war. Here I find traced the crooked signature of Sir Henry Morgan—here, the clerkly hand of the bold

Captain Kidd—and next comes the mark of Blackbeard—a roughly sketched dagger, beside a skull and cross-bones. A bloody and ferocious band——”

Turning over the broad pages, the Invisible continued—

“The time will come when their deeds will appear but as the idle fables of tradition. Then the link which bound all these cut-throats and heroes in one great organization, will be lost—forgotten. Grave men will write histories, and speak of the buccanier—the pirate—the free-booter—as isolated facts in the red history of piracy and murder. And I—I—may survive to read their *grave* volumes, and smile at their brazen falsehoods. ‘*Survive*’—it is a fearful word—”

As the light reveals the face of this unknown personage, who, seated alone in his oaken chair, thus mutters absently to himself, we may see the pale features quiver in every line; yes, we may even behold the large bright eyes, wet with womanish tears.

“Survive! It is indeed a horrible word. To live until all that you have loved is grave-yard dust—to live while every good impulse is turned to evil—to walk around among the tombs of those whom you knew centuries ago—to see their children, nay, the descendants of your own children, rise every day in your path, and, at the same time, be conscious that they can never know you, never call you by name, never, never feel for you a sentiment that is not hatred and loathing.—‘Survive!’ Yes, until the words ‘our Lord the King’ are displaced by ‘our Brother, the Chief of the Republic’—and until the ‘Republic’ is crushed beneath the iron wheels of Despotism and Superstition. There are a great many things embodied in that word—‘Survive!’”

The Invisible started from the chair, and paced along the floor of the cell. For the first time it is evident to us that his pale face, whose tangled hair waves from beneath the cowl, is supported by a strangely distorted form. Even through the disguise of the gown, we may discover the outlines of a shapeless hump, rising at the back of his neck, and his face seems not so much to be supported by a neck, as to rest upon the surface of his broad chest.

“Always to feel the beauty of the Good, and to love it, and yet for ever condemned to the Necessity of Evil. What hell of priestcraft can rival a doom like this? Even now I behold a mariner, fixed upon a shapeless raft, without rudder, oar, or sail, his eye turned toward the light which shines from the dark shore. He may gaze upon the light, stretch forth his arms as if to grasp it, but every moment the tide is bearing him silently and surely away—away, deeper and farther into the blackness and the night. The fate of the mariner is mine. The raft is beneath my feet,—the light shines faintly from the shore—but every moment the dark wave of Necessity bears me farther into the blackness of hopeless night. The light is growing dim and dimmer—soon it will go out in blackness—yet

still the wave will bear me on, on, into that Sea of hopeless Evil which yawns beyond me!"

The cowl was thrown aside, and with the cowl, the monkish gown. Beneath the light stood a deformed hunchback, whose long face, framed in raven black hair, revealed, in every quivering lineament, a despair too deep for utterance, too hopeless for tears.

In the personage known as the Invisible, we beheld none other than the miserable maniac, whom we have beheld before, and heard addressed by the name of Black David.

Clasping his white hands, as that unutterable despair stamps his face, he glares upon the darkness with fixed eyeballs, muttering again, and yet again, the word which has roused him into this preternatural anguish—

"Survive."

In the very midst of this inexplicable despair, his eyes wandered to the floor—a bright object glimmered there, near his feet. Without appearing conscious of the action, he bent down and grasped it, and the light disclosed a small golden coin or medal, to which a faded ribbon was attached.

No sooner did the hunchback behold it, and at a glance read the words, and mark the characters which were inscribed upon this medal, then he sank on his knees, uttering a cry of joy, which pealed upon the stillness of the cell. With the gestures of a madman, he clutched the medal—turned first one side, then the other, to the light, and examined it with an intense scrutiny, that forced his eyeballs from their sockets.

"Here, where the hunter stood, I found it. Ah—I will seek him at once, and force him to reveal to me how it came into his possession." He started to his feet, made one step from the table, but as suddenly came back again.

"It is the same—the same—" and lifting the tangled locks, as he gazed upon the medal, he revealed the livid cross, which was stamped—like the scar of a wound—upon the fair skin of his forehead.

He examined the bright side of the Medal—it bore the figure of a Cross,





with certain numerals inscribed beneath—"A. D. 15—9." Then, turning the medal, he beheld, on the opposite side, an inscription in old English characters: "Eola—November 12.—Lyndulfe."

It may be observed that the figure between the 5 and 6, on the first side of the medal, was dim and almost illegible. It seemed, as the light shone over it, to represent either the figure 3 or 8, and thus the inscription either designated the year 1539 or 1589.

The hunchback held the faded ribbon, which was inserted in an aperture near the rim of the medal, and gazed upon the inscription which it bore on either side, with a delight that might have well been termed madness.

"I will to him—he shall tell me!" With these incoherent words, he turned from the table once again, and disappeared in the shadows of the cell, only to reappear after the lapse of a moment. When he turned from the light, his face was flushed with rapture, but, when he again stood beside the table, a ghastly paleness had fallen upon every feature. The livid cross on his forehead stood out distinctly on the colorless skin.

"Madeline—the hunter has torn it from her breast as a memory of his love—" he uttered the words with difficulty. Then came a groan of horror, mingled with anguish.

"O, curses, eternal curses upon my iron fate! Madeline at this moment lies mangled upon the floor of her chamber, or—in case she survived the hunter's blow—the scalpel of Isaac Behme pierces her bosom, and tears the living heart from its shrine!"

As though his blood was chilled, his limbs paralyzed, the deformed maniac stood motionless, with his hands folded over his breast.

"Day is breaking, and it is too late! This girl might have saved me, not from Death, but from Life; saved me from the unseen hand which crushes me;—she might have spoken unto me the word which will bring near the hour of my Death—and I,—fool, dotard! I have murdered her!"

Once more his gaze was rivetted to the medal—

"Many, many years—centuries of torture—since first it passed from my hand—ah! It is in vain; I cannot pray. To whom shall I address a Prayer? At this hour I would barter the gold of a world—I would exchange intellect and destiny with the vilest serf, only to be able to *believe*, only to have the power to frame one word of prayer——"

Strange and incomprehensible words from the lips of the Deformed Maniac!

He was on his knees, his hands crossed, his head bowed—his lips moved slowly, but no sound was heard.

The light, streaming above him, glowed upon the flakes of his matted hair. His face was lost in shadow, but the heavings of his broad chest betrayed the emotion that thrilled every avenue of his life.

"To whom shall I pray?" he muttered, after a pause—"To God? To Christ? To saints or angels?"—his voice was marked by a horrible sincerity as he continued—"There is no God to me. No Christ, nor Saint nor Angel. There is no other world. There is nothing beyond the grave but vacancy and slumber. All that I can believe, is, that I am here upon the earth, doomed to live with impulses of good always struggling in my heart, and yet always forced to do Evil—to crush pure hearts into hopeless misery—to blight virtue and beauty—to taint children with the leprosy of sin, and wither gray-haired age into a polluted grave. This is my doom—what hath prayer to do with me?"

Let us suppose for a moment that the reveries of this man are sober truth. That he has lived for some hundreds of years, with the impulse of Good always fresh within his heart, and yet the Necessity to do Evil for ever hurling him into the vortex of crime. That for some incredible crime—say, the most fearful crime that Man can commit—he has been doomed to live, and live beyond the circle of Almighty compassion. That the death which he seeks as an unutterable boon is denied him—that the Judgment pronounced by Eternal Power upon his head is comprised in this stern decree—

"Live! There is Good all around you, but you must blight it into Evil. Live!"

Can any thing be more horrible than this?

Once more, let us take it for granted that this deformed hunchback is a Madman. That it is only a fancy—a mere dream of frenzy—that he has lived for centuries, and is doomed to live until unborn ages are past. That it is only a vagary of his distorted reason, which induces him to believe that for him there is no God, no Christ, no Saint nor Angel.

Can any thing in the Universe be more appalling than this?

To both questions, your first answer, urged from your heart, by feeling as natural as our love for a Mother, is, simply but earnestly—"No!"

Think again. Pause for a moment. What does the Creed of a Church, the dogma of a sect hold forth?

*That the Almighty Father will inflict upon countless millions of his creatures, the irrevocable Judgment of an Eternity of Existence, and an Eternity of Crime.*

Which is the most repulsive, my friend? The tradition embodied in this crude history, or the Belief solemnly taught in the dogma of a Church?

"Behold—" said a Reverend man, one Sabbath-day, as he surveyed the thousand faces, mellowed by the mild beams of an afternoon sun—"Behold the sands that stretch beside the waves of the Ocean. Can you number those sands? Once every thousand years, a little bird comes to the shore, and bears away in its beak a single grain of sand. Compute the years which will be passed ere the bird has borne away the sands on

the shore—one grain in a thousand years—and you will have some idea of the duration of that Eternity of woe which awaits the Damned.”

This, it will be admitted, is a somewhat fearful figure—a somewhat fearful kind of Religion. While the little bird bears the sands from the shore,—one grain, only one, in a thousand years—countless millions of God’s creatures are growing older in deathless torture, older in infernal knowledge, in blasphemous Crime. Can you imagine the depravity of a Soul that has existed for only a thousand years in Misery and Crime?

Then do not too hastily deride this Legend of olden tradition, which asserts, that once, in the history of the world, a Man, created by the all-paternal God, was condemned to live for ever on this earth; to live at least while Three Centuries went down to Night; and, feeling all the while the beauty of the Good and the Pure, was impelled by an involuntary Necessity to the Evil and Corrupt.

To our Legend once more.

The Invisible, kneeling on the floor, raised his forehead, darkened by the livid cross, to the light. His eyes, dazzling at all times, as with the light of a wrecked mind, were raised to the dusky ceiling. Over his chest were clasped his pale hands, and a slight air tossed his flaky locks gently to and fro. Never for an instant did he suffer the medal to escape from his grasp.

He was but a miserable wretch, with a body whose deformity was as grotesque as it was hideous, and yet his face, marked with ineffaceable lines, his eyes shining with intense light, his broad forehead, marked by the livid Cross, indicate an intellect of remarkable power.

Around him brooded the shadows and the silence of the cell, sunken deep within the hill-side of Wissahikon. He was shut out from the world, alone with the incredible reality of his fate.

“Could I but believe—” that voice, whose musical accents so singularly contrasted with the hideousness of his form—“Could I but believe in a Father!”

There were tears upon his cheeks.

For when he tried to raise his thoughts to God, all was darkness and chaos. A leaden sky seemed to stretch its hopeless wall between him and the Great Father of mankind.

With a curse, he started to his feet, and, wrapping the mantle about him, prepared to hasten from the place.

“To-night has been to me by no means an idle flight of hours and minutes. Much work—much Evil! Had I but known that Madeline bore this,—” the medal glittered before his eye—“This upon her bosom, all would have been well. A quiet grave—a pleasant repose—peace, peace, after the long night, the ceaseless storm of three centuries. But it



may not be too late, even now—first to the farm-house, and then to the cell of Isaac Behme—”

The yearning desire that was written upon the face of the Deformed, no pencil nor pen can depict—it was as though a preternatural Soul had suddenly filled his distorted frame, and lighted his eyes with the fire of an immortal existence.

“The crime which three centuries has not effaced, may be blotted out, before the rising of the sun !”

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## CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

### THE COMING OF THE DELIVERER.

“*He will come !*” muttered the Priest of Wissahikon—“*At the third hour after midnight the Deliverer will come !*”

The old man sat in the oaken chair, his hands laid on his knees, as he swayed to and fro with a restless motion.

It was in the circular chamber, panelled with oaken wainscot, and rendered almost cheerful by the wood-fire which blazed upon the hearth. In the centre stands the white altar, on which the candles are placed, their light, struggling through the gloom, shining upon the high forehead of the solitary watcher, as, with his hands laid on his knees, he sways slowly to and fro, the silver cross on his heart, glittering like a star.

Thus, alone, for hours he has watched, his eyes of an azure so deep and serene, fixed upon the cross of Iron which rises in the gloom beyond the altar. And all the while, as the old man kept his watch, the fire crackled merrily upon the hearth, and the same light which revealed his pale enthusiastic face, also shone upon the flagon of silver, the wreath of laurel, the Bible with antique clasps, resting between the candles, on the surface of the altar.

Without, all is drear and cold. The Block-house rises darkly amid the pines, with the moonbeams shining over the frozen snow. Its gates are flung wide open—the old man awaits his long-expected guest.

“*He will come ; at the third hour after midnight, the Deliverer will come !*”

These words acquire a singular interest from the tone and look which accompany their utterance.

Hark—the door opens—the young man with the bronzed face and deep dark eyes appears—advances to his father’s side.

It is Paul, with the kiss of the Wizard's child yet warm upon his lip, her words of delirious passion yet echoing in his ears.

Scarce an hour has passed since he left his Father's side—a momentous hour to him—an hour that in future years shall come, clad in impressive memories, to the Dreamer's soul.

As Paul beheld the pale face of his father, with the high forehead and dreamy eyes, all memory of the Wizard's daughter rushed suddenly from him.

Shall that enticing memory ever return to him again?

"Father—" whispers the young man—"May it not be a vain fancy, after all—this Hope that the Deliverer will come ere the rising of the sun?"

You can see the old man turn suddenly round—his eye blazes as he grasps his son by the wrist.

"Seventeen years ago, I left my father-land, and became an exile and an outcast. Seventeen years ago, I forsook the towers of my race, that even now darken over the bosom of the Rhine. I, whose name was ennobled by the ancestral glories of thirteen centuries, turned my back at once on pomp, power,—all that is worshipped by the herd of mankind. In my native land, they have believed me dead for many years—the castle, the broad domains that, by the world's law, are yours, my son, now own another's rule—and here we are, side by side, in this rude temple of the Wissahikon. Why is this, my son?—Speak, Paul, and answer me, why do we dwell together, the father and his children, in this wild forest of a strange land?"

The son veiled his eyes with his clasped hands: the emotion of his father's look thrilled him to the soul.

"I will tell you why! Seventeen years ago, as I bent over the body of my dead wife, even in the death-vault of our castle, on the Rhine, the Voice of God spake to my soul—bade me resign all the world and its toys—bade me take my children, and go forth to a strange land!"

"And there await the Fulfilment of Prophecy!" whispered Paul, raising his head from his clasped hands.

"For seventeen years I have buried my soul in the pages of that book—"

"I have shared your studies, father! Reared afar from the toil and the vanity of worldly life, I have made my home with you in this hermitage. Together we have wept—prayed—watched over the pages of Revelation!"

"You have become part of my soul," said the Priest of Wissahikon, in a softened voice, as he laid his withered hand upon the white forehead of his son: "you might have been noble in your native land; yes, your sword might have carved for you a gory renown from the corpses of dead men, butchered in battle: or the triumphs of poetry and art might have

clothed your brow in laurel, and yet you have chosen your lot with me ; with me, devoted life and soul to the perusal of God's solemn book !”

The dark eye of the son began to burn with the same wild light that blazed over his father's face.

“ And our studies, our long and painful search into the awful world, which the Bible opens to our view, has ended in a knowledge of these great truths—*The Old World is sunk in all manner of crime, as was the Ante-Diluvian World ;—THE NEW WORLD is given to man as a refuge, even as the Ark was given to Noah and his children.*

*“ The New World is the last altar of human freedom left on the surface of the Globe. Never shall the footsteps of Kings pollute its soil. It is the last hope of man. God has spoken, and it is so—Amen !”*

The old man's voice rung, in deep, solemn tones, through the lonely room, while his eye seemed to burn as with the fire of Prophecy.

“ The voice of God has spoken to me, in my thoughts by day, in my dreams by night—*I will send a DELIVERER to this land of the New World, who shall save my people from physical bondage, even as my Son saved them from the bondage of spiritual death !*

“ And to-night he will come ; at the third hour after midnight, he will come through yonder door, and take upon himself his great Mission, to free the New World from the yoke of the Tyrant !

“ Yes, my son, six months ago, on that calm summer evening, as, with Catherine leaning on one arm, you on the other, I strolled forth along the woods, that voice whispered a message to my soul ! To-night the Deliverer will come !”

“ All is ready for his coming !” exclaimed Paul, advancing to the altar. “ Behold the Crown, the Flagon of Anointing Oil, the Bible, and the Cross !”

The old man arose, lifting his withered hands above his head, while the light streamed over his silver hairs.

“ Even as the Prophets of old anointed the brows of men, chosen by God to do great deeds in His name, so will I,—purified by the toil, and prayer, and self-denial of seventeen long years,—anoint the forehead of the Deliverer !”

Hark ! As the voice of the aged enthusiast, tremulous with emotion, quivers on the air, the clock in the hall without, tolls the hour of ONE.. An hour of the New Year has been gathered to the great ocean of Eternity. Only an hour ago, as the tones of that bell rung through the lonely Block-House, like a voice from the other world—deep, sad, and echoing—the last minute of 1774 sank in the glass of Time, and 1775 was born.

As the echo died away, they knelt silently beside the altar, the old man and his son. The white hairs of the Priest mingled with the brown locks of Paul ; their hands, clasped together, rested upon the Bible, which was opened at the Book of Revelations



Their separate prayers, breathing in low whispers from each lip, mingled together, and went up to Heaven in ONE.

An hour passed. Hark! Do you hear the old clock again? How those sullen sounds, ONE—Two—swell through the silent halls.

Still they kneel together there—still the voice of the prayer quivers from each tongue.

After a pause of silent prayer, the old man rises and paces the floor.

“Place your hand upon my heart, my son! Can you feel its throbbings? Upon my brow—ah! it burns like living fire! The hour draws nigh—he comes! Yes, my heart throbs, my brain fires, but my faith in God is firm—the Deliverer will come!”

Vain were the attempt to picture the silent agony of that old man’s face! Call him dreamer—call him fanatic—what you will, you must still admit that a great soul throbbed within his brain—still you must reverence the strong heart which beats within his shrunken chest.

Still must you remember that this old man was once a renowned lord; that he forsook all that the world holds dear, buried himself for seventeen years in the wilds of this forest, his days and nights spent amid the dark pages of the Revelations of Saint John.

Up and down the oaken floor, now by the altar, where the light shone over his brow, now in the darkness, where the writhings of his countenance were lost in shadows, the old man hurried along, his eye blazing with a wilder light, his withered cheek with a warmer glow.

Meanwhile the son remained kneeling in prayer. The lights burned dimly—the room was covered with a twilight gloom. Still the Iron Cross was seen—the white altar still broke through the darkness, with its silver Flagon and Laurel Crown.

Hark! That sound—the clock is on the hour of three! The old man starts, quivers, listens!

ONE! rings through the desolate mansion.

“I hear no sound!” mutters the enthusiast. But the words had not passed on his lips, when Two—swells on the air.

“He comes not!” cries Paul, darting to his feet, his features quivering with suspense. They clasp their hands together—they listen with frenzied intensity.

“Still no footstep! Not a sound!” gasped Paul.

“But he *will* come!” and the old man, sublime in the energy of fanaticism, towered erect, one hand to his heart, while the other quivered in the air.

THREE! The last stroke of the bell swelled—echoed—and died away.

“He comes not!” gasped the son, in agony—“But yes! Is there not a footstep on the frozen snow? Hark! Father, father! do you hear that footstep? It is on the threshold now—it advances—”

"He comes!" whispered the old man, while the sweat stood out in beads from his withered brow.

"—It advances, father! Yes, along the hall—hark! There is a hand on the door—hah! All is silent again? It is but a delusion—no! He is come at last!"

"At last he is come!" gasped the old man, and with one impulse they sank on their knees. Hark! You hear the old door creak on its hinges, as it swings slowly open—a strange voice breaks the silence.

"Friends, I have lost my way in the forest," said the voice, speaking in a calm, manly tone. "Can you direct me to the right way?"

The old man looked up; a cry of wonder trembled from his lips. As for the son, he gazed in silence on the Stranger, while his features were stamped with inexpressible surprise.

The Stranger stood on the threshold, his face to the light, his form thrown boldly forward, by the darkness at his back.

He stood there, not as a Conqueror on the battle field, with the spoils of many nations trampled under his feet.

Towering above the stature of common men, his form was clad in the dress of a plain gentleman of that time, fashioned of black velvet, with ruffles on the bosom and around the wrist, diamond buckles gleaming from his shoes.

Broad in the shoulders, beautiful in the sinewy proportions of each limb, he stood there, extending his hat in one hand, while the other gathered his heavy cloak around the arm.

His white forehead overarched large eyes, which gleamed even through the darkness of the room with a calm, clear light; his lips were firm; his chin round and full; the general contour of his face stamped with the settled beauty of mature manhood, mingled with the fire of chivalry.

In one word, he was a man whom you would single out among a crowd of ten thousand, for his grandeur of bearing, his calm, collected dignity of expression and manner.

"Friends," he again began, as he started back, surprised at the sight of the kneeling enthusiasts, "I have lost my way—"

"Thou hast not lost thy way," spoke the voice of the old man, as he arose and confronted the stranger; "thou hast found thy way to usefulness and immortal renown!"

The Stranger advanced a footstep, while a warm glow overspread his commanding face. Paul stood as if spell-bound by the calm gaze of his clear, deep eyes.

"Nay—do not start, nor gaze upon me in such wonder! I tell thee the voice that speaks from my lips, is the voice of Revelation. Thou art called to a great work; kneel before the altar and receive thy mission!"

Nearer to the altar drew the Stranger.

"This is but folly—you mean to mock me!" he began; but the wild

gaze of the old man thrilled his heart, as with magnetic fire. He paused, and stood silent and wondering.

"Nay, doubt me not! To-night, filled with strange thoughts in regard to your country's Future, you laid yourself down to sleep within your habitation in yonder city. But sleep fled from your eyes—a feeling of restlessness drove you forth into the cold air of night—"

"'This is true!'" muttered the Stranger in a musing tone, while his face expressed surprise.

"As you dashed along, mounted on the steed which soon will bear your form in the ranks of battle, the cold air of night fanned your hot brow, but could not drive from your soul the Thought of your Country!"

"How know you this?" and the Stranger started forward, grasping the old man suddenly by the wrist.

Deeper and bolder thrilled the tones of the old Enthusiast.

"The rein fell loosely on your horse's neck—you let him wander, you cared not whither! Still the thought that oppressed your soul was the future of your country. Still great hopes—dim visions of *what is to come*—floating panoramas of battle and armed legions—darted one by one over your soul. Even as you stood on the threshold of yonder door, asking, in calm tones, the way through the forest, another and a deeper question rose to your lips——"

"I confess it!" said the Stranger, his tone catching the deep emotion of the old man's voice. "As I stood upon the threshold, the question that rose to my lips was——"

*"Is it lawful for a SUBJECT to draw sword against his KING?"*

"Man! You read the heart!" and this strange man, of commanding form and thoughtful brow, gazed fixedly in the eyes of the Enthusiast, while his face expressed every conflicting emotion of doubt, suspicion, surprise, and awe.

"Nay, do not gaze upon me in such wonder? I tell thee a great work has been allotted unto thee, by the FATHER of all souls! Kneel by this altar—and here, in the silence of night, amid the depths of these wild woods—will I anoint thee Deliverer of this great land, even as the men of Judah, in the far-gone time, anointed the brows of the chosen David!"

It may have been a sudden impulse, or, perchance, some conviction of the future flashed over the Stranger's soul, but, as the gloom of that chamber gathered round him, as the voice of the old man thrilled in his ear, he felt those knees, which never yielded to man, sink beneath him; he bowed before the altar, his brow bared, and his hands laid upon the Book of God.

The light flashed over his bold features, glowing with the beauty of manhood in its prime, over his proud form, dilating with a feeling of inexpressible agitation.

On one side of the altar stood the old man—the Priest of the Wissa-



hikon—his silver hair waving aside from his flushed brow—on the other, his son, bronzed in face, but thoughtful in the steady gaze of his large full eyes.

Around this strange group all was gloom: the cold wintry air poured through the open door, but they heeded it not.

"Thou art called to the great work of a Champion and Deliverer! Soon thou wilt ride to battle at the head of legions—soon thou wilt lead a people on to freedom—soon thy sword will gleam like a meteor over the ranks of war!"

As the voice of the old man in the dark robe, with the silver cross flashing on his heart, thrills through the chamber—as the Stranger bows his head, as if in reverence, while the dark-browed son looks silently on—look yonder, in the dark shadows of the doorway!

A young form, with a dark mantle floating round her white robes, stands trembling there. As you look, her blue eye dilates with fear, her hair streams in a golden shower, down to the uncovered shoulders. Her finger is pressed against her lip; she stands doubting, fearing, trembling on the threshold.

Unseen by all, she fears that her father may work harm to the kneeling Stranger. What knows she of his wild dreams of enthusiasm? The picture which she beholds terrifies her. This small and gloomy chamber, lighted by the white candles—the altar rising in the gloom—the Iron Cross confronting the kneeling man, like a thing of evil omen—her brother, mute and wondering—her father, with white hairs floating aside from his flushed forehead. The picture was singular and impressive: the winter wind, moaning sullenly without, imparted a sad and organ-like music to the scene.

"Dost thou promise, that when the appointed time arrives, thou wilt be found ready, sword in hand, to fight for thy country and thy God?"

It was in tones broken by emotion, that the Stranger simply answered—  
"I do!"

"Dost thou promise, in the hour of thy glory—when a nation shall bow before thee—as in the fierce moment of adversity,—when thou shalt behold thy soldiers starving for want of bread—to remember the great truth, written in these words—*'I am but the Minister of God in the great work of a nation's freedom?'*"

"Then, in His name, who gave the New World to the millions of the human race, as the last altar of their rights, I do consecrate thee its—  
DELIVERER!"

With the finger of his extended hand, touched with the anointing oil, he described the figure of a Cross on the white forehead of the Stranger, who raised his eyes, while his lips murmured as if in prayer.

Never was nobler King anointed beneath the shadow of Cathedral arch—never did holier Priest administer the solemn vow! A poor Cathedral,

this rude Block-house of the Wissahikon—a plainly clad gentleman, this kneeling Stranger—a wild Enthusiast, the old man! I grant it all. And yet, had you seen the Enthusiasm of the white-haired Minister, reflected in the Stranger's brow, and cheek, and eyes; had you marked the contrast between the shrunken form of the "Priest," and the proud figure of the Anointed,—both quivering with the same agitation,—you would confess with me, that this Consecration was full as holy, in the sight of Heaven, as that of "Good King George."

And all the while that young man stood gazing on the stranger in silent awe, while a warm glow lightens up the face of the girl trembling on the threshold, as she beholds the scene.

"When the time comes, go forth to victory! On thy brow, no conqueror's blood-red wreath, but this crown of fadeless laurel!"

He extends his hand, as if to wreath the Stranger's brow with the leafy crown—yet look! A young form steals up to his side, seizes the crown from his hand, and, ere you can look again, it falls upon the bared brow of the kneeling man.

He looks up and beholds that young girl, with the dark mantle gathered over her white robes, stand blushing and trembling before the altar, as though frightened at the boldness of the deed.

"It is well!" said the aged man, regarding his daughter with a kindly smile. "From whom should the Deliverer of a Nation receive his crown of laurel, but from the hands of a stainless woman!"

"Rise! The Champion and Leader of a People!" spoke the deep voice of the son, as he stood before the altar, surveying, with one glance, the face of his father, the countenance of the blushing girl, and the bowed head of the Stranger. "Rise, sir, and take this hand, which was never yet given to man! I know not thy name, yet, on this Book, I swear to be faithful to thee, even to the death!"

The Stranger rose; proudly he stood there, as with the consciousness of his commanding look and form. The laurel-wreath encircled his white forehead; the cross, formed by the anointing oil, glistened in the light.

Paul, the son, buckled a sword to his side; the old man extended his hands as if in blessing, while the young girl looked up silently into his face.

They all beheld the form of this strange man shake with emotion; while that face, whose calm beauty had won their hearts, now quivered in every fibre.

The wind moaned sadly over the frozen snow, yet these words, uttered by the stranger, were heard distinctly by all—

"From you, old man, I take the yow! From you, fair girl, the laurel! From you, brave friend, the sword! On this Book I swear to be faithful unto all!"

And as the light flashed over his quivering features, he laid his hand upon the Book and kissed the hilt of the sword.

## CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

## THE OLD LONDON COFFEE HOUSE.

"SOLEMNLY, gentlemen, and truly, I must. 'There's daybreak in the chinks of the door, and you can hear the kuckerekoos all over the town. I must indeed—"

The little man smoothed his white apron, with his big hands arranged his wig, which, sooth to say, inclined too much to the left side of his narrow forehead, and arranged his hose, which hung somewhat loosely about his knees. In one hand he held a burnished candlestick, containing the last remains of a flickering light, and as he spoke, in tones at once bland and deprecating, he accompanied every other word with a grotesque genuflection, intended for a bow.

Around the table which stood near the broad fire-place—a circular table, strewn with pewter mugs, long-necked bottles and broken pipes—three persons were seated in capacious oaken chairs. Their faces bloomed with the freshness of Madeira, or, to speak perchance more correctly, leadened with the stupor of malt and tobacco. For every hand grasped a mug of shining pewter, and a pipe of plain clay was inserted in every mouth.

It was a large room, with white-washed walls and a neatly sanded floor. In one corner, certain vessels glittering on a range of shelves, gave some indications of the character of the place. The doors and windows were carefully closed, as if to seclude the belated revellers from the light of daybreak, and the remains of a glorious wood-fire smoked and smouldered among the ashes of the hearth.

In a word, this room, into which we have so unceremoniously entered, was nothing less than the famed public hall or bar-room of the "London Coffee House," a quaint fabric, with deep gabled roof, which stood at the corner of Market and Front streets, to the great delight of the town-gossips and coffee-drinkers of old Philadelphia.

Here the good people thronged to sip their coffee, tipple their Jamaica rum, discuss the politics of the day, and decide upon the merits of King George, and the Continental Congress.

The persons who occupied the oak chairs may attract our attention, as appropriate types of certain classes of society in the year 1774.

One was a burly fellow, whose round cheeks vividly brought to mind a lively image of the full moon on a Dutch clock, while his scarlet uniform might have scared whole legions of male turkeys, and frightened a herd of bulls into hysterics. With one leg—encased in a huge boot of



black leather, polished to a charm—laid upon the table, this gentleman regaled himself with alternate whiffs of his pipe and draughts of beer. Near him, with a very long nose, and lips of no character at all, was a goodly citizen, whose dark attire, soiled by tobacco ashes and beer drippings, gave evidence of the night-long revel. And beside the citizen, whose steel buttons and steel knee-buckles spoke of the economical habits of a careful son of traffic, was a slender youth, dressed daintily in a wide-skirted coat of brownish velvet, with a buff waistcoat and satin breeches. His face, rather insipid in its character, was very pale; his large blue eyes—looking like the eyes of a Chinese mandarin on a porcelain pitcher—were altogether leaden. As he smoked away, sucking at the stem of his pipe with an energy that hollowed his haggard cheeks into caverns, and started his leaden eyes from their sockets, he swayed to and fro in the capacious arm-chair, with a motion that reminded you of a crab-apple tossing about in a bowl of hot liquor.

"Must—eh?" said the scarlet gentleman, with a hiccup—"What must you do, Tadkins?"

"The landlord, as you know, is gone to bed these three hours, and is sleepin' away now at the top of his speed, with two night-caps on his bald head, an' I must—indeed I must—"

Here Tadkins, the imposing representative—in the absence of the Landlord—of the dignity and beer of the far-famed "London Coffee House," elaborated a strange performance in gymnastics, by suddenly dropping his head, stretching forth his arms, and scraping his right foot over the sanded floor. This, translated into English, was intended to say, "I, Christopher Tadkins, tapster of the Old London Coffee House, leave the drift of my remarks to your good sense, gentlemen!"

"What does *he* mean?" cried the gayly attired youth, from a corner of his spacious mouth, very remote from the centre—"Tad, it's rather odd, I vow, 'fore George—" his favorite way of getting up a little genteel profanity—"Speak out, man, and don't stand there bobbing your head until your wig flies off—"

"Yes—" remarked the elderly citizen—"enlighten us. Be lucid. Translate yourself from dumb motion into English. Or, if you're drunk, say so. We're not severe to-night. It's New Year's morning, you know——"

The elderly gentleman buried the tip of his nose in the recesses of his pewter mug.

"Why, gentlemen, you must see that's its reether late—" Tadkins placed his right hand in the centre of his apron,—"I ax you to reflect—you, Antony Hopkins, Marchant—" he bowed to the elderly citizen—"You, Octavius Germin, Esquire—" a bow to the pale-faced youth—"an' you, Cap'in Grosby, of his Majesty's hundred and twelfth regiment—"

Poor Tadkins came to a sudden pause. In the fervor of his speech, he had suddenly lost the idea, on the strength of which he commenced his profound appeal.

"Well?" grunted the bluff Captain Grosby—"Well?"

"There's no denyin' it, gentlemen, it's as late as daybreak, and you must *g-o*!" shrieked Tadkins in utter despair. "If I let you stay any longer, the Lan'lord will give me such a latherin' to-morrow—that is, to-day—as—"

Again Tadkins came to a sudden halt.

"Germin—" the Captain waved his red hand, encircled by white ruffles, toward the pale-faced youth—"Just oblige me by heating that poker, and while it is doing, hand me an empty mug."

There was a vast deal of significance in his bland whisper. Tadkins retreated a step in evident alarm, while Germin handed the pewter mug, with the remark—

"That's easier to manage than a hot poker. Shy it at his wig, but don't hurt his head."

Tadkins retreated another step—"Gentle-men!" he gasped.

"Now, Sirrah, do you see me? If you don't put a cork into that hole in your face, and stop off your jabber, I'll just take the nicest piece of flesh off the right corner of your cocoanut, that ever you *did* see. I will, by ——!"

We cannot decipher the oath, from the MSS. which relates this striking threat, but have no hesitation in giving the assurance, that said oath was fierce, bloody, royal—altogether worthy of a British Captain, inspired by a sense of his dignity, and a dozen mugs of beer.

Tadkins, without a word, retreated toward the shelves, where his candle shone over the array of burnished pewter. Yet, even as he shamled along, he muttered an inaudible rejoinder, and grew very bitter on the corpulent Briton, wishing among other things that his nose would set fire to his face, and straightway reduce him to a cinder, as a warning to all future ages. From the secure retreat near the furnished shelves, he watched the drinking-party, with an earnestness that lasted only for an instant. No sooner had Tadkins placed the candle on a shelf, and straightened his wig—blackening one eye with the candle-snuff, which adhered to his fingers, then he fell fast asleep, and snored like a north-wind whistling through a key-hole.

"To resume—where did I leave off? Now that we're free from the impertinent interruptions of this fellow—" Grosby looked with a sleepy stare into the faces of his companions.

"At the stake in the middle of a dark woods with fire at your feet and a troop of Indian devils dancing round you—" suggested the young gentleman, speaking the sentence in one short breath.

"One in particular was touchin' you up with a pine torch under your

nose—" remarked the plain citizen, again secluding his nose from the light.

"Yes, sirs!" The obese Captain panted for breath, as he forced the smoke of his pipe through his large nostrils—"There I was. Tied to the stake. Injins all around. Tomahawks—pine torches—ugly old women, screaming like so many walking Bedlams. I *was* there, sirs. A tomahawk was brandished over my head, but I looked the red scoundrel in the eye—in the eye, sirs—in the eye—"

The Captain lifted his mug to his mouth, and, with the beer froth clinging to his large lips, quietly remarked—

"I wonder why *he* does stay?"

It does not appear that this abrupt remark was connected, in the most remote degree, with the narrative which the worthy Captain had been so impressively telling. His companions were too far gone in the abstruse meditations engendered by the beer mug, to notice this sudden diversion of the Captain's train of thought. Indeed, Octavius was engaged in the hopeless attempt to entrap an imaginary black beetle, which flitted between his eyes and the unsnuffed candle, while friend Anthony muttered to himself the mysterious words—"Only ten o'clock, my love—not so late as you think—New Year's Eve, you know—"

He evidently imagined himself in the presence of his indignant spouse.

"Why does *he* stay?" repeated the Captain.

"Eh? I vow I don't know—" cried Octavius, suddenly brightening up;—"He said that he would join us at three o'clock, and now it's day-break. Were there ever such lively roosters in your part of the world?" he added, as the trumpet peal of an early chicken-cock echoed through the silence of the town.

"A lord—a lord—" muttered Anthony, with an absent eye, and finger slowly undulating between his nose and his pewter mug—"A live Lord in Philadelphia, consigned by his father to my care, and nobody knows it. Nobody—except you—and you—and—he, he—and *me*."

It was no doubt an excellent joke, for friend Anthony chuckled over it, until his nose resembled a premium pear, at some horticultural exhibition.

"What are you doing?" cried the Captain, with his sleepy eyes fixed upon the pale youth—"In the name of his Blessed Majesty! Octavius, my dear—"

"Eight—nine—ten—" muttered Octavius, surveying a little pile of gold coin, which he had placed upon the table. "If *he* succeeds, I lose. If he don't, I win. How do you think it will turn out, Captain?"

The individual addressed seemed to be wrapt in deep cogitations for a moment, and then answered gravely—

"If *she* was a lady of quality, I could tell you in a minute. In that case you would lose. Distinct-l-y, sir! But, as she is a peasant girl, I



am induced to think that our friend—that is, John—eh? *John!* Capital joke, to call himself John, plain John,—eh?”

“R-E-G, *Reg*,” muttered the decorous citizen, writing with the end of his finger, moistened with beer, upon the white table,—“I,—*Regi*,—N-A-L-D,—*nald*,—*Reginald!*”

As though he had accomplished some problem of incalculable intricacy, the good citizen looked around with a glance of triumph, and pointed to the name, inscribed upon the smooth board in characters—not of light—but of beer.

“When did you get a letter from the *old boy*?” observed Captain Grosby.

“Yesterday. Mysterious—ugh! very mysterious—” responded Anthony. Diving his hand into a side-pocket, he drew forth a letter cumbered by a large seal, and holding it near the light, read from its pages in an under-tone—“‘I charge you, have a care over my—my son—and let no effort be spared to further the great object of his journey to Phil—Phila—del—’ very mysterious!”

“And if he succeeds, I win the guineas,” said Mr. Octavius, making an earnest effort to draw a cloud of smoke from a cold pipe.—“Why does he stay? Ha, ha—it must be a delicious interview. The dear little girl listens to the insinuating stranger, and—”

“Speakin’ o’ girls reminds me of politics,” remarked the Merchant, arranging himself in a position of commanding gravity, with one limb crossed over the other, and his chin very near his knee, while his thumbs and the ends of his fingers were placed together, with due solemnity—“Do you think, Captain, that this Continental Congress will ever come to *much*? Great talk in the State-house yard, in these days, about the rights of the Colonies, and—snuff the candle, if I may trouble you, Octavius—ministerial oppression. Many words, a great many words; and, if I may use so bold a phrase, an unlimited Ocean of—of—small-talk.”

“Sir. Si-r-r! The name of his blessed Majesty King George is—”

The Captain inhaled an immense volume of smoke, and paid his devotions to the beer mug. It was quite a pleasure to hear him conclude his remarkable sentiment:

“That is my opinion, Sir. It is.”

“Exactly my own way of thinking,” said Anthony. “I have always held those opinions.”

Octavius said nothing, but continued to count his guineas.

“Eh—bye the bye, when do you expect John to leave the city?”—the Captain turned his leaden eyes toward the citizen.

“Some months will elapse—” began the Merchant, performing a solemn pantomime with his thumb and fingers, when his words were suddenly interrupted by an alarming clamor at the tavern door.

“Do you hear, Tadkins? Hello—the fellow’s asleep—suppose

you let *him* in, Octavy, my dear," said the Captain, in a mild, loving way.

"It's very easy to say, Let him in; but when a man has deposited some two or three bottles of wine within his waistcoat, with a superstructure of beer and tobacco smoke, it becomes a question how—a man—can walk—"

Octavius rose to his feet, however, and reached the door, after several erratic movements to the right and left. No sooner had he removed the wooden bar, than the latch was lifted, and a figure rushed over the threshold and moved with hasty strides toward the table.

"Hello! Why, you're white as a sheet! Rather an unpleasant object!" cried the Captain, starting in his chair. "You don't call it a decent thing, to plunge in upon us, looking like a corpse, do you?"

"What's the matter?" drawled Anthony, gazing vacantly into the face of the intruder.

It was Jacopo, no longer red and blooming in the cheeks, but pale as a dead man. His slender limbs trembled under the weight of his rotund paunch, as he stood by the table, his small black eyes peering steadily into the lean visage of the merchant. Even his nose, which we have seen blooming and blushing like a fire coal about to kindle into a blaze, was colorless now.

"Jacopo! How goes it, man?" Octavius staggered to his side—"Where's John?—I'm ready—" he leaned for support upon the table, while his face was invested with the apathy of the last degree of drunkenness—"How's your health, my boy? Favor this company with a song."

And then the bewildered Octavius favored the company with a touching couplet from a pathetic ballad of the olden time:

"My name is Robert Kidd,  
And so wickedly I did—  
As I sail-e-d, as I sa-i-l-ed."

"Octavy, my love," politely interfered Captain Grosby—"Hold your jaw."

Jacopo did not speak a word in answer. Panting for breath, he looked silently into the faces of the boon companions, while his features were pallid with a blank terror.

Anthony dashed his mug upon the table, and staggered to his feet. "Where's your master?" he cried, as he beheld the terror-stricken face of Jacopo.

"The fact is, my friends, I'm a little out o' breath—" Jacopo spoke very slowly, looking over his shoulder toward the door, with the glance of a nervous man, who fancies that he is pursued by an Apparition. "But you surely are jesting—you do not mean to say that my Lor—(that is, *John*)—is not here?"

A dead silence ensued. The terror imprinted on the face of Jacopo impressed the boon companions with an involuntary awe. The Captain rose, and the three gathered around the companion of Reginald Lyndulfe.

"What's this! Where is he? Your face would frighten the devil himself. Out with it at once—" and the burly officer shook Jacopo roughly by the shoulder.

"Out with it, or I won't answer for your health, by ——!"

"Has *he* come yet?" faltered Jacopo, sinking into a chair with a grotesque sigh, which resembled a snore. "*Corpi di bacco!* This is very singular—" he grasped a wine-bottle, and inserted the neck in his capacious mouth. "A-a-h! I am very chilly. They produce such cold weather in this new country—"

"Would you be so good as to speak?" thundered the Captain,—when suddenly a footstep was heard, and a form, crossing the threshold, came rapidly through the shadows toward the table.

Every eye was turned with the same movement toward the face of the new-comer. Not a word was spoken, and the breathless silence deepened the feeling of terror which had been communicated to the revellers by the broken words of Jacopo.

Reginald Lyndulfe stood disclosed in the light—silent—motionless—all color banished from his face—his gray surtout thrown back on his shoulders, with the gay apparel which it had concealed, covered with mud, and torn in many places. His entire appearance was wild and haggard. In silence he surveyed every visage, his blue eye discolored by injected blood, while his hair hung in damp flakes about his forehead, and his compressed lips, no longer red with youth and passion, wore the color of bluish clay.

After this silent gaze, he flung himself into a seat, or rather sank into the chair, with the manner of one who has been exhausted by hours of fatigue and suffering. Still, no one broke the silence; the boon companions cast stealthy glances into each other's faces, and then as stealthily surveyed the faces of Jacopo and his master.

Reginald dashed his cap upon the table, and with his colorless hand wiped the moisture from his forehead.

"Jacopo—" he said, in a hoarse voice, that was scarcely audible—"Have you any brandy?"

These words may provoke a smile, but there was nothing like pleasantry upon the countenance of those who surveyed the haggard face of the young man. With a hand that trembled visibly, Jacopo reached the bottle which was labelled "Brandy," and placed a capacious glass goblet before his master.

Reginald's hand also trembled as he grasped the bottle, and held it over the goblet until it contained at least one half a pint of that inspiring poison,



which cankers the blood with its peculiar leprosy, and degrades the man into a demon.

He raised the goblet, and did not set it down until every drop of the burning liquid had passed his lips.

The surprise, the terror of the company now manifested itself in words.

"Zounds! An old trooper like me couldn't stand such a dose as that, and I've swallowed the stuff these twenty years. You, my boy, you are remarkable for your abstinence. I never saw you so much as half-drunk or quarter-drunk, in all the time I've known you. Zounds! Enough to kill the devil!"

"A half a pint!" ejaculated Anthony—"and without water!"

"I couldn't drink it if you were to cut me up into coach-whips!" was the somewhat mysterious remark of Octavius.

Jacopo gazed in silence into the face of his Master. The eyes were still blood-shotten, the lips livid, the cheek colorless. The brandy did not seem to have the least effect upon him; at all events its effects were not in the most remote degree perceptible.

A painful silence ensued.

Reginald held forth the goblet once more, with an emphatic gesture—"More brandy!" he whispered.

Jacopo lifted the bottle, and paused when the goblet was half-filled, the bright red liquid shining through the clear glass.

"Go on—" said his master, in that almost inaudible tone.

Again he raised the glass, and drained it to the last drop.

The surprise and anxiety of the company may be imagined. Every man sank back in his seat, and the same ejaculation quivered from every lip.

Yet still Reginald sat before them, his cadaverous face, lighted by the candle, as pale and ghastly as ever. His hands, which were laid upon his knees, trembled as with an ague-chill; with blood-shot eyes, and compressed lips, and pallid cheeks, he gazed vacantly into the faces of the spectators.

"It is very strange—" he said, in that hoarse whisper—"The brandy has not the least effect upon me. I believe that I am about to be taken ill with some mortal disease."

At once the tongues of the spectators were unloosed.

"What is the matter?" cried Anthony.

"There's something dreadful happened to you—" said the Captain.

"The girl—"

At that word, uttered by the slender Octavius, who laid his hand upon his guineas, a shudder agitated the face of the young man.

"Pshaw—I had quite forgotten our wager. Have not seen her to-night—she did not keep her appointment—she—she—ha, ha—has *jilted* me."

With his eye fixed sternly upon the astonished face of Jacopo, he slowly uttered these words, with a miserable attempt to force a smile.

"The guineas are yours!"

"Jacopo, I wish to say a word to you," whispered Reginald, and he led the way toward the door, where the light of the breaking day fell upon their haggard faces.

"Go at once to Mr. Hopkins's house,—secure the package on my desk—and saddle two of the best horses in his stables. Then you will cross the river, and wait for me in the woods at Cooper's Point. I will join you there, within a half-hour."

"Two of the best horses—how shall I get them over the river?"—there was a ludicrous astonishment in Jacopo's face.

"There is a ferry from the foot of High street, or you can get the old Fisherman at Mulberry street wharf to take them over in his flat-boat. But they must be over the river in a half an hour, or—"

His face became suddenly agitated.

"Jacopo—" he continued, abruptly changing the subject—"You left the farm-house after I did. Was there any thing like surprise at my sudden departure?"

Jacopo answered in a whisper, hoarse and thick with emotion—"I was aroused from my sleep by a loud outcry. I hurried from my room, and found that the noise proceeded from *her* chamber—"

"Madeline—" Reginald shuddered, as he whispered the name.

"There was a throng of neighbors gathered there, and as I crossed the threshold, I saw old Peter standing in their midst, pointing to the floor. I pressed through the crowd, looking for you, and—"

"Go on—go on—"

"I did not see your face, but your name was spoken every moment, by the crowd. And—"

"Madeline?" gasped Reginald, grasping his servant by the wrists.

"She was not there—"

Reginald tottered backward, and would have fallen, had not the arm of Jacopo held him firmly against the posts of the door.

"Go on—" and Reginald cast a beseeching glance in the face of Jacopo, which reflected the ghastliness of his own features—"speak it at once. Madeline—was not—there—"

"She had left the farm-house, but Old Peter, who was wonderfully agitated, pointed to the floor, and called the attention of the neighbors to the stain of blood, which was visible at his feet. Nay, my Lord, the torch-light disclosed not only a stain, but a pool of blood—" Reginald's features became blank with vague horror.

"A pool of blood \* \* \* and Madeline gone—There has been foul play \* \* \* but go at once, Jacopo, and obey my commands. Not a word—"

"But, my Lord, you are not well—"

"Fool! Do you hesitate? Let the horses be ready in Cooper's woods, and—" he glanced over Jacopo's shoulder, towards the table—"Hopkins will not suspect—a vessel sails from New York to-morrow—go, I say, and do not fail, for there is more than life at stake—"

He pushed Jacopo through the door, and hurried toward the table. The faces of the boon companions were turned toward his visage, as he sank into a seat. Not a word was spoken, but it was evident that they waited for an explanation of all this mystery, from the lips of Reginald.

"Hopkins, I was about to remark—" the Merchant started up in his chair—"that is to say, Octavius—" the leaden-eyed reveller raised his head from his hands—"in fact, Captain—"

Turning from one to the other of the boon companions, and exciting the earnest attention of every one by his address, Reginald slowly continued—

"Have you such a thing as a well-flavored Havanna cigar?" He accompanied these remarkable words with a hearty burst of laughter.

There could not have been a more ludicrous surprise, had he asked the gallant Captain to pull a church steeple from his pocket, or desired the Merchant to take a merchant vessel of three hundred tons from the crown of his cocked hat.

"He is drunk," was the muttered ejaculation of the young gentleman.

"Crazy!" thought Mr. Hopkins.

"Had some love-scene with the girl—" was the reflection of the Captain, who was a man of the world, and somewhat dangerous to the sex, withal.

However, the Merchant drew from his pocket a small parcel, carefully wrapped in yellow tea-paper.

"A sample of the best Havanna—received 'em yesterday from Cuba—" and he handed Reginald a cigar, observing at the same time, in an undertone—"White as a sheet, by George!"

Reginald lighted the cigar, and placing his feet upon the table, soon encircled his face with a fragrant cloud.

"The fact is, gentlemen," he exclaimed, as though he had been silently elaborating some previous subject of discussion—"The Colonies will not dare to do it. They will talk, but they dare not act—"

And in a moment the company were involved in the mazes of a political discussion, which, as the hour was daybreak, and three of their number stupid with the bottle and pipe, and the fourth not far from crazy, was, in every point of view, a remarkable event.

"They may dress themselves as Injins, and attack whole cargoes of tea, but when it comes to musket and bayonet—B-a-h!—" the Captain was decided in his opinions. There was a profundity in his "B-a-h!"

"The fact is, gentlemen, to look at the subject philosophically, every thing is degenerated in this country. Instead of a Church Establishment,



they have conventicles of drab-coated Quakers. Instead of a King, a mob—and in place of law, order and Christianity, they have a Continental Congress. The general degeneracy, gentlemen, does not end here. It extends from the political to the alimentary and convivial world. The roast beef is tough, and the brandy worse than medicine—”

“I attended some of their big talks, at Carpenter’s Hall, in September last,” said the acute Hopkins—“There were some fiery speeches, but ‘Brag is a good dog,’ and so forth, as the proverb has it.”

“The idea that any man would be so ridiculous as to—” the young man possibly may have meant to advance some profound truth, or elaborate some new theory in political philosophy, but he concluded with breaking his pipe, and calling on the Captain for a song.

While the discussion continued, Reginald smoked in silence, which was only broken by an occasional word, evidently uttered with the intention of prolonging the argument. There was no change in the unnatural pallor of his face; even the cigar, mild and peaceful in its effects, failed to dispel the sullen gloom which clouded his features.

“There is no doubt whatever, that when the King is fully informed of the proceedings of the Continental Congress,” gravely exclaimed the Merchant, “and put in possession of all the facts connected with this matter, he will exclaim, with an indignation truly royal—Zounds! Captain, my pipe has gone out, and I’ve no paper to light it again!”

The sedate Hopkins surveyed his pipe with an expression of indescribable despair, as he placed these mysterious words in the mouth of his dread Majesty, King George.

“I must confess that your figure is by no means lucid,” the Captain remarked, with a profundity altogether significant of beer and tobacco—“What in the d——l has King George and the Continental Congress to do with a pipe?”

“Bah! Captain, this pipe, at which I have been puffing hopelessly for the last minute, is cold as an icicle. Have you an old newspaper about you—it’s so unpleasant to light one’s pipe at a reeking tallow-candle—”

“Not an old newspaper, but a new one. I received it from a friend to-day, who came over by the last ship. Just tear a strip off the border; don’t spoil the reading. It must last me for the next three months.”

The Captain flung the paper on the table, and Hopkins began, with great care, to peel a narrow strip from its border, muttering meanwhile—

“British Gazette and Chronicle. ‘Novem-b-er—eleventh—Hello! What is this? ‘Last dying speech and confession of Greeley, the notorious Pirate hung on Tyburn,—’”

The Merchant dropped his pipe, and with his eye rivetted by the dingy type of the London paper, perused the paragraph which arrested his attention, with undisguised, but by no means sober interest. His lips moved

unceasingly in a ridiculous grimace, and his eyes grew idiotic, in a fixed stare.

"What's the matter?" cried the Captain, taking his huge boot from the table, and bending forward with sudden attention—"Has his blessed Majesty taken cold, or is—the—Church threatened with an attack of—" the redoubtable Captain hesitated for a word, but quietly added, after a moment—"epilepsy?"

"Just read me a bit of fresh Court news, will you?" suggested Octavius.

Hopkins, however, did not answer, but, growing suddenly pale, continued absorbed in the perusal of the paper.

"Reginald, will you have the kindness to read *that*?" With his finger placed upon the particular paragraph, he handed the paper across the table. The young man, absorbed in a reverie, did not seem to hear him at first, but the Merchant, starting up from his seat, held the paper before his face.

"Read *that*, if you please—the date of the paper is the same as your father's letter, but it is plain that he had not seen the 'Gazette and Chronicle' when he wrote to you."

The agitation of Hopkins excited the attention of the young man, whose features were clouded by apathetic gloom. Seizing the paper, he cast his eyes over its columns, examined the date, surveyed the advertisements and the intelligence from court, the debates in Parliament and the announcements of the theatre.

"It does not interest me," he said, with a vague stare—"I see nothing here—"

"*That* paragraph," cried Hopkins in his shrillest tone, while, bending over the table, his long nose almost touched the face of Reginald.

The young man beheld the paragraph designated by the Merchant, whose face betrayed such singular emotion.

In silence he read, while the boon companions anxiously marked the sudden changes of his handsome countenance. The agitation of Reginald was appalling. He surveyed the paper with the glare of a madman, crushed it in his hands, and scattered it in fragments on the table.

"Look ye—" he gasped, as he placed his hand on the Merchant's shoulder—"You will find the object of your search in the valley of the Wissahikon. Her name is Madeline—she dwells in—"

As though maddened by some memory of this eventful night, he turned hastily away—the half-finished sentence on his lips—and fled with unsteady steps from the room. As he reached the threshold, the light of the rising sun streamed over his haggard face, and disclosed his eyes, the lids inflamed and the balls discolored by injected blood.

"I must away," he said in a low voice, as his back was to the room and its occupants, his face to the rising sun—"The horses wait for me at Cooper's woods, and a ship sails from New York to-morrow—"

He crossed the threshold, and heard his name pronounced by a voice more hollow and despair-stricken than his own. By the light of the fresh winter dawn, he beheld a face on which were stamped the indications of an ineffaceable despair.

“*You here—*” he cried, and staggered backward in affright,—“*Whence come you ?*”

And a voice, faint and whispering, gave answer—

“*From Wissahikon !*”

While these scenes occurred at the Old London Coffee House, in Philadelphia, events as strange and varied in their interest took place in the glen of Wissahikon, seven miles away. Let us retrace our steps.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

### THE SEALED CHAMBER.

“*PAUL*, the Stranger wrote his name upon a piece of parchment, which I have enclosed and sealed within this paper, in the form of a letter. I have not looked upon that name, nor must you know it until the time for action arrives. It cannot be long ere blood must be shed. Perhaps, a few months will elapse, or another year may pass before the first blood will flow. There will be a battle—many battles—armies will be swept away—this new land grow rich in graves. But when the time arrives, you will break the seal of this letter, read the name of the Deliverer, and obey the words which you will find written beneath that name. Promise, my son, solemnly promise, that you will not break the seal, until a year has gone—”

The light which the old man held in his thin hand—marked by prominent veins—cast its rays along the gloom of the corridor, which traversed the Block-house or Monastery from east to west. At one end was the narrow staircase leading into the upper rooms or cells of the edifice ; at the other the door, opening upon the gate. Near the door stood the old clock, whose monotonous ticking was heard distinctly through the stillness. On either side appeared the doors of the rooms on the lower floor of the mansion.

They stood before a door of dark walnut, whose panels were obscured by spider-webs. It had not been opened for many years.



Paul surveyed the high forehead and clear blue eyes of his Father, with a glance which mingled reverence with something of awe.

"I promise, Father," he said—"Until a year has passed, I will not break the seal."

"Come hither, Paul:" the old man had taken a rusted key from the folds of his robe, and inserted it in the lock of the walnut door—"Enter this chamber, and listen while I speak."

The candle which the Father carried in an iron candlestick, revealed a small apartment, square in form, and without windows or furniture of any kind. It was panelled with dark walnut. In the centre of the floor arose an altar or table covered with black cloth, moth-eaten and obscured by spider-webs, and on this altar an urn of white alabaster was visible.

With a sensation of involuntary fear, Paul crossed the threshold, and beheld the gloomy features of this coffin-like chamber. His father's pale face was agitated by an emotion, which resembled the rapture or madness of an inspired Prophet. His eyes shone with deeper light; a joy that might well have been called holy, radiated over his high narrow forehead and trembled on his lips.

"Paul—you behold this sealed packet. I place it within the urn. Kneel, my son, beside the altar, and promise that you will not break the seal until a year has passed."

At his father's feet the young man knelt, while his bronzed face, lighted by dark eyes, and shadowed by masses of rich brown hair, was strongly contrasted with the pale face, blue eyes, and snow-white locks of the old man.

"I promise, Father!"

The Father, after gazing for a moment upon the urn, which stood out vividly from the dark background, led the way from the chamber. He locked the door, and again addressed his son—

"Kneel once more. Take this key, and swear that you will not unlock the door of this room, until a year has passed."

"I swear, Father!" said Paul, as he knelt in the dust of the corridor, the light shining warmly over his thoughtful face. He clutched the rusted key with an involuntary earnestness.

"Come hither, Paul;" and the old man led his son for a few paces along the corridor. They stood before a door of black walnut, on whose cobweb-hung panels a cross was rudely traced. At the sight of that door, all that was calm or rapturous passed from the old man's face, and his down-drawn brow and tightened lips indicated emotions of a far different nature.

"Father, you are not well—the night air chills you—" said Paul, with evident anxiety.

The old man's thin lips moved, but it seemed as if he had not the physical power to frame an audible sound.

Paul gazed upon his father with speechless anxiety and wonder.

"Let me see your hand, my son—"

Paul extended his hand—

"It is a fair hand,—as white and delicate as a woman's hand—and yet—"

The Father dropped the hand with a shudder.

"Father, you are cold—let me assist you to your chamber—the night is far spent—and it is very cold in this corridor—"

In a moment, the peculiar emotion which stamped the old man's face with so much of horror and fear, passed away. He was calm again; his blue eyes shining with steady light, while his long white hair trembled gently aside from his colorless forehead.

"Kneel once more—"

Paul knelt at his father's feet.

The old man extended his thin white hand, and placed its slender fingers upon the brown locks of his son. Both father and son were attired in robes of dark velvet, somewhat faded and worn; on the shrunken chest of the old man, and the firm, manly bosom of his son, shone a silver Cross.

Around them was the silence of night, only broken by the distant echoes of the winter wind.

"Repeat after me, my son, a solemn vow—"

Paul clasped his hands upon his breast, and cast his eyes to the floor, trembling, he knew not why, at the touch of his father's hand, at the sound of his voice.

And then, in accents bold and deep, he repeated the words which came from the lips of his Father:

*"I, Paul, devoted to God from my birth, do vow by his holy name, never to enter the door of this sealed chamber, before which I kneel, and whose surface bears the sign of the cross, until——"*

The old man paused, and veiled his eyes, while Paul looked up in wonder.

He awaited the conclusion of the oath, but his Father did not utter the closing words, until a pause of some moments.

"Until—" repeated Paul, looking earnestly into his father's face.

"*Until my father is dead—*" said the old man, his voice tremulous and his eyes shaded by his hand.

Paul hesitated for a moment, and then, his eyes swimming in moisture, slowly repeated the words—"Until my father is dead."

"And if you fail in this, Paul, the Curse of God will descend upon you, and blight you into a hopeless grave!"

For the first time in his life, Paul beheld an expression of fierceness—anger—rest upon the face of his Father.

"Dost thou hear, my son?" continued the old man, clasping his wrist.

"I hear father, and will obey," said Paul, looking with reverence into the venerable face, whose blue eyes gazed fixedly into his own. "Have I ever disobeyed you? Can the time ever come, when I will cease to obey?"

The old man pressed his hand kindly upon the forehead of his son.

"God's peace be upon you, Paul," he said, and, light in hand, hurried along the corridor toward his chamber. It was his nightly farewell to his child which he had spoken. Paul arose, and, gazing upon the receding form of his father, entered the door opposite that of the sealed chamber.

Ere an instant had passed, he had crossed the threshold, and by the light of a fading lamp, beheld the familiar features of his own room.

The lamp stood on a desk, and, struggling with the gloom, revealed the details of a small chamber, with a rude couch in one corner, a window at its head, whose shutters were fast closed and bolted, and a range of shelves near the desk, burdened with dusky volumes.

Paul seated himself in the oaken chair, near the desk, and, resting his cheek upon his hand, fixed his eyes sadly upon the light, and surrendered himself to his thoughts.

Those thoughts were at once varied and tumultuous. His breath came in gasps, as he sat enveloped by the gloom and silence of the chamber; his eye grew large and vacant in its glance.

What power of language may picture the nature of that hour of solitary meditation?

Now his eye wandered to the shelves, burdened with massive volumes, with clasps of steel and silver. There were the works of the Astrologers and Alchemists of the past ages, mingled with the writings of the spiritual dreamers and religious mystics of Germany, in the sixteenth century. From boyhood, nay, from very childhood, Paul had dwelt upon their pages, and as his mind—gifted by the Almighty with a power as strange as it was peculiar—grew into form, it had been moulded and colored by these written Thoughts of Astrology, Alchemy, and Mysticism.

And amid the large volumes were two small books, which more than once attracted the gaze of Paul, as he sat absorbed in that silent self-communion. The only books, indeed, which were not devoted to the dreams of Astrology or Alchemy, or the bewildering frenzies of Religious Mysticism. Plainly bound, their covers indicating much service, they bore two rudely emblazoned names; one was "SHAKESPEARE—" the other, "MILTON."

How the heart of Paul bounded within him, as he thought of the day when, from an obscure corner of a neglected chest, he had drawn forth these priceless volumes!

Near his elbow was another volume; it was open, and its broad pages bore the bold, firm characters of the Hebrew tongue. It was the Bible—



the Old Testament and the New in one language—which Paul had read for years; the only copy of the Book which he possessed. Dearer he prized it, than all his works of Alchemy or Astrology, dearer even than the reveries of Religious Enthusiasm; it was, to his soul, a thousandfold more precious than the pages of those seers of the heart, Shakspeare and Milton.

For from that boldly printed Hebrew volume, the Lord God of Heaven and Earth talked to him, the unknown Boy of Wissahikon, and talked in the language of the Other World. The Hebrew did not seem to him the language of men, but the awful and mysterious tongue of Angels. Its syllables of music rolled, full and deep, into his soul, as though a spirit stood by him, while he read, pronouncing the words, whose meaning penetrated his brain.

Does it not seem to you a thought of some interest and beauty?

Here, enshrouded in the gloom and silence of this cell of the Wissahikon Monastery, sits the Boy of Nineteen, shut out from all the world—its experience—its love and hate—a vague blank to him.

And yet, as he glances over the Hebrew page, his soul, escaping from the narrow room, goes out into a distant land, where the palm trees stand in the noonday sun, by the shore of the mysterious Jordan, or where the waves, creeping up the beach of Galilee, break in ripples at the feet of the God enshrined in flesh.

Or, he is amid the silence and shadow of that Eden whose joy was without a pang, whose flowers concealed no poison, whose naked Eve came, sinlessly and without shame, to the lake, and saw the serene sky arch above her, the clear waters smile at her feet. Then with the builders of the Babel Tower—with the earnest Moses, leading forth from Serfdom a nation of slaves, and leading them to Civilization and Religion—with the warrior-poet David, whose love to Jonathan is beautiful even now, after the lapse of the many thousand centuries—with Isaiah the Beautiful and Job the sublime—or, last of all, and most beautiful of all, with that toil-worn face, which one day looked forth from the hut of a carpenter, and said to all the world—"God, enshrined in flesh and toil, has come to walk like a Brother among ye the sons of men."

The thoughts of Paul, at this still hour, dwell not altogether upon the pages of the Hebrew Bible, nor do they wander in the fairy world of Shakspeare, or with the terrible Phantoms of Milton.

"It is strange—but it is true! The words, the very tone of my father, seem to call me suddenly into a new life. I stand upon the Present and survey the Past, with fear—with trembling. A singular life has been mine. Bred afar from the world—within the walls of this forest home—the only faces familiar to me, are the faces of my Father and Catherine. Beyond those faces, beyond the forest home lies the great world, a dim chaos, whose darkness is not enlightened by a single star. Our life has

been very rude in this forest home. Our fare simple, our attire such as was worn by our ancestors. We have neither decked ourselves in gay apparel, nor slain a living thing in order to pamper appetite. Water from the spring—bread from the corn that grows in the fields, beyond the woods—the fruits of summer and the bloodless produce of the garden—such has been the fare, for years, of the old man of Wissahikon and his children.

“Had I eaten of flesh, or drunken of wine, there might mingle with my blood an impetuous desire to see the great world, and join in its relentless war for fame and gold. But here, within these walls, my life shall glide gently on, until it flows, without a murmur, into that great Ocean which Men call Death.

“But this Oath—the Sealed Chamber—the strange agitation of my Father?

“What are his plans in regard to my Future? The Deliverer for whose coming we watched so long, came but an hour ago—Wherefore does my father say to me, ‘*Wait one year!*’ or ‘*Until I am dead, Paul!*’

“I have never heard myself addressed by any other name than Paul Ardenheim—my father’s name is also unknown to me. Hold! Black David, the deformed, who sometimes comes to the Monastery, and bears messages for my father to the city, may know our name. Shall I ask him?

“No! It is not for me to lift the curtain which enshrouds my father’s secrets, and conceals his purposes from my view. It is for me to sit at his feet, to wait in patience. But—the future of Catherine?—Shall she dwell for ever in this home? She is so fair, so beautiful,—and yet so heaven-like in her beauty,—so like one of those women of whom the Prophet Shakspeare speaks, that I could weep to think of her dying within these walls, neglected and unknown!”

You will remember, that Paul applied the word “Prophet” alike to Shakspeare and Milton. They had received their intellect from God, and all that was good in them was God-like; therefore—so the crude Enthusiast reasoned—they were his Prophets, whenever they enunciated a divine thought or embodied a holy truth.

“I cannot banish the thought. It seems to encircle me, and force me to answer its mysterious questions. It is the thought of the mystery which overshadows our life,—all dark as I look to the past, darker yet as I gaze into the future. Father! Father! Would that the time were here, when, placing me on one hand, and Catherine on the other, your lips could tell to us the history of your life, and the history of ours!”

Paul felt his brow grow feverish as it rested upon his hand, while his dilating eyes were fixed upon the half-shadowed walls of his room. It was an impressive scene. That narrow chamber, dimly lighted, with the

form of that darkly attired Enthusiast seated in the centre of its light and gloom, his bronzed face and earnest eyes manifesting thought at once intense and bewildering.

Paul arose and paced the floor.

It came upon him suddenly; like a burst of voluptuous music, like a gush of intoxicating perfume, like a dream of fragrance and moonbeams—the memory of the beautiful woman whom he had seen to-night, for the first time.

His cell was full of gloom, but even in the gloom he could see her flashing eyes,—it was very still in the old Block-house, but through the stillness he could hear her voice, whispering words of wild, boundless passion.

Wherever he turned, he saw a vision of a beautiful form, whose bosom, half-revealed, panted slowly into light, and throbbed into warm loveliness, beneath his gaze.

It seemed as though the vision had rushed upon him like the frenzy of a fever—his heart beat in tumultuous throbs—he gasped for breath, and wildly stretching forth his hands, tottered to the chair.

Veiling his eyes, he endeavored to banish that voluptuous image. But she was there, before him—he felt her hand trembling softly over his forehead—her breath upon his cheek. Again, her darkly flowing hair swept over his face; again his blood was ice and flame by turns, as her voice whispered gently—“I have waited for you, Paul. Have loved you—and am yours for ever!”

It was in the midst of this voluptuous frenzy, that Paul cast his glance toward the light, and for the first time beheld a letter, inscribed with these words—“To my son.”

“It is from my father. He must have written it last night, before the Deliverer came. I will banish the maddening memory—and yet—she is very—very beautiful!”

He broke the seal, and read the letter, traced in the tremulous hand of his father.

Sunset, December 31, 1774.

MY SON—

In case the hope, in which I have lived for seventeen years, proves false, and the Deliverer for whom we have waited in Prayer, for so many years, does not come—even then, Paul, it is my purpose to fulfil, with regard to you, the command of the Lord. From your infancy you have been devoted to God. You have been sacred from the world, set apart from the faces of men. The relentless lust of traffic, the feverish desires of ambition, the hollow sophistries and cold selfishness of the great world, have not polluted your virgin intellect. You have bloomed into life in the wilderness—a life, pure and serene as the stars. Therefore, to-morrow,



at the hour of sunset, I will fulfil the purpose of my heart, and solemnly dedicate you to God.

Behold the manner of this dedication.

The upper rooms of our mansion you have never seen. They are sealed to all human eyes, and have been for years. But when you traverse the corridor which extends between those rooms, you will read on those closed doors, the names of Anselm—Joseph—Immanuel.

These were my brothers, not in the flesh, but in the spirit. With me they left Germany,—left house and home,—and we came into the wilderness together. Together, in these woods, we reared the altar of our Brotherhood. Our creed was simple—Love to Man is Love to God.

While you were but a child, and Catherine scarcely a babe of two years, they died, these brothers of my heart, and left me alone in the old mansion. In their death-hour, I vowed a solemn vow that you and Catherine should be devoted to the great work of our Religion. I vowed it, clasping their chilled hands, with their glassy eyes fixed upon me—vowed it to each one as he sunk back in the wave of death. A month or more intervened between their deaths—in the space of half a year they all were gathered to the grave.

—To-morrow I will solemnly dedicate you to the work which those brothers loved all their lives, and clung to with unfaltering faith in the hour of death.

You will be called upon, first of all, to take this vow—"In the presence of God, and surrounded by the skeletons of the Brothers of the good cause, I do vow to devote all my efforts, to bend my life, my intellect, my wealth, to the progress of that cause.

"And in order that my strength may not be weakened, my heart clogged, or my brain clouded by any tie of earth, or taint of earthly passion, I do further solemnly vow, in the presence of the dead, never to contract marriage, nor to look upon a woman with the eye of sensual love. My only bride shall be the good cause—my only hope and aim in life, its final success."

Are you ready for this vow, my son? Let your time be passed in Prayer, so that the hour of sunset to-morrow does not find you unprepared.

YOUR FATHER.

While the young man perused this paper, his face indicated powerful emotion. There was no color in his rounded cheeks, when he came to the last words. The paper fell from his hands, and, with a sudden failure of all physical or mental strength, he sank unconscious in his chair.

The lamp, glimmering with a faint lustre over his marked features and motionless form, seemed not to disclose a living but a dead man. The stern mental contest which had shook his reason to its centre, and de-

prived his strong mind of its native vigor, left him stiffened and cold in every nerve.

It was after a long pause that he awoke from his stupor, but with his first glance of consciousness he beheld his father's letter. At once he started from his seat, and pulling forth a drawer, which was concealed in the side of the desk, he was about to place the letter with the manuscripts which the drawer contained, when his attention was suddenly enchained by a new object of wonder. A slip of paper, not more than two inches in breadth, lay on the manuscripts, its bold characters standing blackly out from the white surface. On this paper, Paul beheld a few words, written in a quaint and vigorous old English character. The ink was scarcely dried; the paper was different in quality from any he used; indeed, as Paul, ere perusing its words, held it between his eyes and the light, he beheld the date of its fabrication, woven in its texture, surmounted by a British Crown and coat of arms. That date was

1590.

"The ink is scarcely dried—I have no paper like this in my desk, nor have I ever seen any thing of this kind in possession of my father. The character is strange—but let me read it first, before wasting the time in vague conjectures—"

Midnight, December 31, 1774.

To Paul, Baron of Ardenheim:

Thou seekest to know. Enter the door with the Cross upon its panels. Search the urn. The Past and Future will be opened to thee.

"There is no signature," exclaimed Paul, as he sunk back in the chair, utterly bewildered—"The mystery of my life grows darker! Who placed this paper in my drawer? Whose hand traced these singular words? Can it be that my father wishes to test my faithfulness to the vow which I took upon myself not a few moments ago? But no—it is not my father's hand. These words were written by a firm hand, whose nerves knew not a single tremor of weariness or age. Oh, for a ray of light to shine upon this mystery!"

Again he examined the paper; the ink was very black, the writing distinct and bold. The "water-mark," or date of the fabrication of the paper, was seen clearly, as he held it before the light—1590.

"Enter the door with the Cross upon its panels!" It would be perjury. 'Search the urn—' there is an urn within the Sealed Chamber—but, I must not think of it. It would be treason to my father—yes, the shame of falsehood would blister on my forehead. It cannot for a moment influence my thoughts, this idle message sent to me by unknown hands—"

While these thoughts, half-uttered, flashed through the brain of Paul,

the words: "Enter the door with the Cross upon its panels," rang unceasingly in his ears.

The paper fell from his hands, and rested on the desk beside his father's letter.

"The Past and the Future will be opened to thee!"

Paul heard these words, as though a spirit had spoken them gently in his ears.

"I swore a solemn oath, that I would not——" he uttered the words, and starting from his seat, paced up and down the floor of his narrow room.

All was breathlessly still—he could hear the ticking of the old clock, which stood at the remote end of the corridor, or hall—it seemed to him that he could also hear the frenzied throbbings of his heart.

He was lost in a wilderness of conflicting thought. He was at once possessed by a yearning desire to know the mystery of his life, and with a terrible consciousness of the guilt which would darken his soul, in case he violated his oath.

"Paul, *Baron* of Ardenheim," he muttered—"Baron of Ardenheim! I have heard those words before! To-night—it was when I stood on the rock of Wissahikon. *Baron* Ardenheim! Is it my father's title, the name by which he was known in the great world?"

Paul took the lamp, and went from that cell—the dearest home of his hours of thought—and closing the door, stood in the gloom of the corridor. An unbroken stillness prevailed. The lamp revealed the door on which the figure of a Cross was traced—shone distinctly upon its panels, while all around was gloom. Paul's features became violently agitated as he glanced upon the door; he stood like a man bewildered by a supernatural spell, gazing upon the dim Cross with expanded eyes.

"The Past and the Future shall be opened to thee!" he murmured, and advanced a single step.

Then came another pause, in which Paul stood without motion in the centre of the corridor, his face colorless, his eyes expanded and unnaturally brilliant.

"No! No! In the name of God, I dare not think of it!—Yet the Past is to me a dim chaos—the Future a starless midnight, peopled only by phantoms \* \* \* \* No! I will to my father's couch, and press my kiss upon his lips as he slumbers, and then come back to my room again to bury these fearful thoughts in Prayer!"

Passing along the corridor—the old clock throbbing all the while through the breathless stillness—he saw that the door of the room next to his own was slightly opened.

It was his sister's chamber.

Inclining his head toward the dark panels, he listened——

All was still, save the low, soft breathing of the sinless sleeper



“God’s blessing upon thee! There are no frightful phantoms to mar thy rest—no infernal temptation scares thy soul from its dreams. And yet—it is a strange thought—thy fate is like unto mine. Thou must take the vow, and swear with me, never to look with love upon the form of a living thing——”

His brow clouded by a sombre expression, Paul passed on, his face agitated in every feature. Next came the door of the old man’s chamber. Paul bent his head toward its panels—all was silent—his father slept.

Softly unclosing the door, Paul passed the threshold, the light glimmering dimly over the details of a cell-like place, with a rude couch in one corner. With a noiseless footstep Paul advanced to the couch, and saw the form of his father, prostrate in slumber, the profile of his aged face turned toward the light. He had flung himself upon the plain bed without removing the dark robe from his spare limbs, and as he slept, the silver cross shone like a point of flame upon his breast.

His eyes were closed, his face very calm, and the light imparted a faint glow to his snow-white hair.

Beside his bed, his lips firmly set, and his eyes glaring from the fixed brows, stood his son, whose broad chest heaved with violent agitation, as he silently surveyed the calm image of venerable age which slumbered before him.

Moved by the violent throbbings of his heart, the Cross which he wore now disappeared, and as suddenly flashed into the light again.

As the eye of Paul became more accustomed to the gloom of his father’s narrow room, he beheld a singular statue which rose at the head of his couch, starting from a recess in the panelled walls. Paul beheld this statue with an involuntary tremor, for the words which his father had many times spoken to him, came vividly to his memory, at this lone hour of night and thought.

“When Man is free from all manner of bondage, when the mission of the Redeemer has done its perfect work, then shall the Lead become Gold, and the Gloom be turned into unutterable Joy.”

These words had often fallen from his father’s lips—as Paul looked upon the singular statue, half-revealed by his light, he remembered them with painful distinctness.

It was a figure of the Saviour, moulded or carved in lead, the form clad in the humble garments of toil, and the face stamped with a look of unutterable sadness. The large motionless eyes, the lips agitated by a smile that had more of sorrow than joy for its meaning, the great forehead, stamped with a sublime despair—all moulded of lead—impressed the heart of the gazer with sensations of peculiar awe.

“That Image, Paul——” the old man was wont to say—“Is the Image, not of the Saviour triumphant over death and evil, but of Jesus imprisoned among the creeds and sophistries of the Church. There is a singular

tradition connected with the statue, my son. It was moulded by the hand of a Hussite heretic, who, imprisoned by the followers of Papal power, was offered life and liberty on one condition. 'You are an artist,' they said—'Your hand is cunning in the arts of painting and sculpture. Carve for us an Image for our Altar, and you shall be free!' The heretic, encumbered by his chains, heard them, and lifting his sunken features from the shadows of his cell, faltered a response to their request. 'Of what metal will you have it?' 'Of gold!' 'Whose image shall I carve?' 'The Blessed Saviour triumphant over death—' 'Give me some lead, and let me have a furnace, so that I may prepare a model of the statue which you desire! They consented. For weary days and nights, the Hussite was secluded in his cell, toiling steadily at his labor. They became impatient, but he replied, pointing to the statue, imprisoned in its mould, 'Soon it will be done.' One morning he unclosed the door of his cell. While his form, wasted by persecution and toil, trembled like a leaf, and his cheek, hollow and care-worn, looked like the cheek of a corse, he led the throng of priestly Lords across the threshold. 'You asked of me an Image of the Saviour triumphant over death. I could not mould a Lie into gold, for I felt that my hour was near. So I moulded Him of lead, and moulded him, not as he appears in the Bible, but as he is in your Church, chained by your hollow forms and blasphemous ritual. Behold—behold—the Image of the Imprisoned Jesus!' He said this, Paul, and while the Priests encircled him in fiery anger, he fell back cold and dead. That Image was hurled into some forgotten corner, for the Priests felt that its divine despair was an eternal rebuke upon their heathenish worship. But the followers of Huss lifted it from the dark corner, they bore it to their secret place of worship,—and now it is here, in the home of Wissahikon, a stern Image of the Church, which imprisons the Soul of the Blessed Saviour in a leaden and lifeless ritual. The day comes, my son, when the Lead will become Gold, and the unchanged gloom be turned into changeless joy; when the Lord, no longer imprisoned by creeds, shall walk freely once more, into the homes and hearts of Men!"

Such was the singular tradition of the Imprisoned Jesus.

—It may have been that the dull hue of the lead deepened the singular impression which the Image produced; but as Paul held the light near and nearer to it, it seemed to him that he did not merely behold a face and form of lifeless metal.

"I cannot banish the thought that a Soul is imprisoned in that leaden mass. A Soul enclosed in the fixed eyes and despair-stricken forehead of the Image—a Soul that listens to me now—watches me as I stand beside my father's couch—reads my heart—and reads the Future of my life, which is dark and terrible to me!"

Paul shrunk back from the cold leaden eyes of the Image. "I will press my lips to my father's forehead, and then retire to my bed!"

There was something altogether impressive in the sight—that young face marked by the traces of powerful emotion, pressed against the withered countenance of the old man.

As Paul bent down, the light which he held glowed more warmly over the leaden Image, and by the uncertain ray, the smile which dwelt upon the sad face of the Imprisoned Redeemer, seemed to change into a sneer.

“Good night—God’s peace upon your gray hairs!” murmured Paul, but his Father did not hear him. He slept the calm slumber of a serene Conscience.

Paul raised his head, and for the first time, as the rays of his lamp wandered from the face to the form of the Image, he beheld the extended hand, and felt all his serenity of soul vanish before a sudden tempest of temptation and thought.

For on the forefinger of that leaden hand an iron key was suspended, bearing a label on which these words were written, and written in his father’s hand—

“THE KEY OF THE SEALED CHAMBER.”

“Can it be,” gasped Paul, “that my father means to tempt me? Father—” he extended his hand as if to rouse the aged man, but as suddenly withdrew it—“No! he has left the key suspended to the hand of the Image, so that I might become accustomed to it, and forget all temptation in the force of mechanical habit.—It is a massive key, and the label which it bears has been written not many hours ago—”

He touched the key, and felt his hand drop to his side, as though detected in an act of guilt. The face of the Image seemed to smile upon him, in deep compassion.

Paul extended the light, and regarded the key with a fixed glance, while the Image looked upon him with that sad smile, and the aged man slumbered unconsciously beneath his gaze.

His face manifested an intensity of mental agony; there was no hue of life upon his cheek: while his lips were firmly compressed, his large dark eyes glared fixedly upon the leaden hand and the iron key.

It was a moment of fearful thought.

Paul started at a sudden sound—but in an instant became calm again—it was only the old clock striking the hour of four.

“Father, the trial is terrible—” faltered Paul. “This ordeal fills my brain with madness. Ah, there is a hope—I may for ever place a barrier between my soul and this horrible Temptation—”

With a sudden grasp he seized the key, and casting one glance toward the slumbering face of his father, he strode madly to the door. On the threshold he paused, held the light toward the bed, and looked over his shoulder. That light gleamed faintly over his father’s face, but as its ray shone for a moment over the image, Paul with a shudder saw the leaden features move, and the fixed eyeballs glow with red lustre.



He dared not look again, but holding the light in his left hand, and clutching the key in his right, he closed the door of his father's room. He hastened with unsteady steps along the corridor in the direction of his own chamber.

"The key shall tempt me no longer—" he said as he hurried along—"In a moment, through the window of my room I will hurl it forth into the darkness and snow!"

He stood before his chamber, but the same ray that disclosed the panels of his door, also shone upon the Cross of the opposite door—the door which led into the Sealed Chamber.

Paul rushed madly toward it, as though all power of self-control had suddenly passed from his brain. While his face was marked with the traces of that frenzy which boiled like molten fire in every vein, he extended his hand, and attempted to insert the key in the lock. His hand trembled, and the attempt was vain.

Paul sank on his knees. For a moment all was a blank; his senses were deadened by a sudden stupor.

When reason and consciousness returned, he found himself still on his knees, the key clutched in his cramped fingers, while the cold damps moistened his forehead.

"Ah, the fearful trial is passed. I am saved."

Slowly he rose to his feet, and was turning his face away from the Cross on the door, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

It was not the firm clasp of a vigorous hand, but its pressure was soft and gentle. And yet that scarcely perceptible pressure held Paul as motionless as stone. He could not turn and look upon the person whose hand touched his shoulder, but, conscious of the terrible danger which he had just escaped, he feared to gaze into the face of a human being. The blush of shame glowed on his cheek.

"It is my father!" the thought crossed the mind of the Enthusiast—"He has watched me, and seen me place the key in the lock—"

He was afraid of the old man's wrinkled face and deep blue eyes.

The hand was still upon his shoulder, its soft pressure imparting a singular warmth to his frame.

"Father—" Paul began.

"Paul!" answered a voice, that broke in deep emphasis upon the stillness of the corridor.

And the hand which had pressed his shoulder, touched his neck with its fingers. Paul felt the blood burn in every vein, as he turned, and, holding the light in his quivering hand, gazed upon the intruder.

Did the pale face and high forehead of the old man meet his gaze? Or the soft eyes and golden hair of Catherine?

"Paul, are you afraid of Fortune! Afraid to cross that threshold and stand face to face with your future fate!"

It was the beautiful face of a woman, the large dark eyes of passionate love, that met the gaze of Paul, as he heard the voice, whose every accent fired his blood.

"Ah—madness again—" and Paul retreated from the vision of impetuous loveliness which glowed upon him from the gloom of the corridor. "The Wizard's child!"

She was there, her form enveloped in a robe of rich velvet, bordered by glossy fur. Around her face, gathered the dark hood, whose folds gave new beauty to her face and relieved the intense blackness of her hair. Her eyes, lighted up with a clear unchanging radiance, flashed upon him from the shadow of their long fringes—her velvet robe was agitated by the motion of her proud bosom.

This vision completed the bewilderment of the Enthusiast.

"Has earth and heaven combined against me? Is it not enough to be tempted by my own heart? Not enough to feel the key of the Sealed Chamber in my grasp, and see the door gloom before me, its Cross burning my very eyes with an incredible fascination? Must the air give forth its Spirits, and the image which haunts my brain take bodily shape, and come in incarnate loveliness to my side! Away—away—I will not peril my soul, I dare not break my Oath—I cannot, cannot fling a lie into my father's face!"

Deep and echoing, his voice swelled through the corridor. The warm lips of the woman parted in a smile.

"I am no spirit, Paul," she said, and flung back her hood. Freely and in copious waves, her raven hair descended upon her shoulders. While her olive cheek was fired with vermillion, and her large eyes swam in moisture, and the ripe redness of her parting lips was contrasted with the whiteness of her teeth, she touched his arm with her soft hand, and glided nearer to his side.

"Whence come you?" cried Paul.

"Is it so far from your home to mine? Only a mile, by the path that leads over the Wissahikon, and through the woods.—"

"But the night is cold—the ground is covered with snow—the forest dark and dreary—"

"I know it, Paul, but the Voice bade me seek your home—"

"The Voice?" echoed the bewildered Paul.

"Do you not remember?"—again she smiled, and dashed aside the luxuriant hair from her face—"It was the voice that told me long ago of you and your love. And after you left me, not many hours ago, after you thrust me from you and——"

She laid her finger upon the slight wound which marred the pale beauty of her forehead.

"After all this had occurred, and I was desolate and alone, the Voice spoke again and told me that you loved me still, told me that you would

return, yes,—it told me that together we should climb the height of fame and power.”

How her eyes flashed into new brightness, as, placing her hand upon his neck, she uttered these words!

Paul was spell-bound. It was no spirit voice that spoke, no spirit hand that trembled over his neck. It was a beautiful woman, whose proud loveliness glowed into voluptuous life, as her lips murmured—“We should climb the height of fame and power!”

“After the voice had spoken these words of hope to me, I slept. In my dreams I saw your face. Again I heard the Voice—‘Would’st thou aid thy lover in the direst moment of his fate? Away to the home of Paul—away by the path which crosses the Wissahikon, and terminates at the door of the Monastery. The door is open—thou wilt find thy lover trembling on the threshold of his Fortune. Bid him enter the Sealed Chamber and fear not.’ I obeyed, Paul—and am here.”

“The Sealed Chamber!” echoed Paul.

“Do you fear?” and the touch of her hand, trembling over his forehead, filled every vein of the Enthusiast with the frenzy of passion. “Do you hesitate? I am but a weak woman—” how proudly her bosom heaved as she said the words! “I may not pierce the cloud of mystery which encircles us. But to woman, in her very weakness, God hath given a power akin to Prophecy—it is the instinct of her heart, it is the inspiration of her love. That power, Paul, tells me that your future—our future, Paul—lies within the Sealed Chamber. Do you love me? Enter, and do not fear!”

It seemed to Paul that he could listen for ever to the music of her voice; and while her eyes flashed in all their brightness, and her form, gliding closer to his own, heaved and swelled in every vein; the Enthusiast could not turn his gaze away, even for a single moment, from this picture of voluptuous beauty.

“You love me!” he gasped—“You, whose glances fill my soul with new life, whose form seems to me more beautiful than a dream of Heaven—you—”

“Love you!” exclaimed the Wizard’s daughter—“Is it so strange, when I have seen your form, in my dreams by night and dreams by day, for more than a year? Do you still hesitate? The key of your Fate is in your hand—”

“But the Oath which I took, not one hour ago, kneeling on this very spot, at the feet of my father—”

Upon the brow of the beautiful girl darkened a slender vein, swelling with a serpentine outline from the transparent skin.

“Father!” she echoed, her face so near the visage of Paul, that he felt her breath upon his cheek—“I remember—”

And she clasped her forehead with her hands.



“ You remember—”

“ The words of the Voice,” said the Wizard’s daughter: “ as it bade me seek your home, it also said—‘ Tell him, tell Paul, that the man who calls himself his Father, has no right to that sacred name—’ ”

Paul shrunk back from her side, looking into her glowing face with a glance of vacant terror.

“ Who *calls* himself my father—”

“ ‘ Tell him also, that the mystery of his life is concealed within the walls of the Sealed Chamber. Once beyond its threshold, he will know his father’s name—’ ”

Had these words been spoken by the withered lips of age, the glow of anger would have crimsoned the face of Paul, the fierce denial risen to his tongue.

But they were uttered by lips that were ripe with youth and passion; and as they fell on the listener’s ears, his eye was enchained by a face whose eyes flashed with love, through the intervals of long flowing hair. As he heard the strange revelation, he saw the tumultuous motion of her velvet robe, he felt the trembling of her form, as she pressed nearer to his heart

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

### PAUL ALONE WITH THE TEMPTER.

“ LADY, I would speak with you—” he exclaimed, as he led the way into his own room, and placed the light upon his desk. “ Let me have one moment of calm thought,—only a moment—” and his gaze was rivetted to the key of the Sealed Chamber, which he clenched in his right hand.

The girl, whose eyes shone with changeless brightness, sunk into a chair, her robe quivering with the impetuous pulsations of her bosom. Not once did she remove her gaze from the pale features of the Enthusiast. There were some moments of unbroken stillness—Paul was alone with the Wizard’s daughter.

Not in her own chamber, as some few hours ago, but in that cell of the Block-house which had for years been the home of his thoughts. Resting his brow upon his hand, he could only gaze in her face, and grow wild and bewildered with the dazzling beauty of her eyes.

As he gazed, his mind was agitated by contending memories. All that he had ever read of woman, came crowding on his brain, in a throng of contrasted images. She seemed to him like some form of which he had read; like the fascinating image of one of those women, whose surpassing beauty gives freshness and bloom to their memories, even after their loveliness has crumbled into grave-yard mould, and the shadows of dead ages brood darkly over their dust.

Was it Ruth, so pure and beautiful, who, with her brown cheek lighted by the Judean sun, bent toiling amid the full sheaves of the rich man's field? Bathsheba, whose dazzling loveliness made the Poet-King a Traitor and Murderer? Or the star-eyed daughter of Egypt, whose gorgeous beauty inspired the Son of David with that glowing Love-drama, called the Song of Solomon? Or the Juliet of Shakspeare, the Eve of Milton, or some creation of his own brain? Did she resemble the voluptuous form, which, gliding one summer day before Herod the King, so maddened his soul, that he gave her, as a birth-day gift, the head of the Baptist?

The impression which the beauty of the Wizard's child made upon the soul of Paul, mingled these images with a darker association. She seemed to him something like the tender Esther, the daughter of Mordecai the Jew, with a shadow of Shakspeare's Lady Macbeth, darkening over her white brow.

Yes, even as Paul felt the inspiration of her eyes, she seemed a beautiful embodiment of some fearful deed, the splendid shrine of a Satanic Thought.

"You hesitate—" she said, raising her white hand and sweeping the luxuriant hair from her face.

Paul was silent. He could hear the monotonous sound of the old clock—the throbbing of his heart—and the death-like stillness impressed him with an omen of approaching Evil.

"Hesitate, when there is greatness to be achieved, glory won by a solitary exertion of your will!" She bent forward, until the light shone fully upon her face—her eyes grew brighter, her lips assumed a more passionate red.

"Greatness—Glory?" echoed Paul, in an absent tone; and then came a murmured thought—"What grandeur of earthly power is worthy for a moment to be placed in the balance with the possession of this beautiful form? What glory like the beauty of her eyes—"

"Listen to me, Paul. My life has been like your own, strange and dark with mystery. Yet I feel that our fate is linked, through good and ill, for life or death, either for purposes of glory, or for deeds of shame. Your heart confirms my words. Our destiny is one. It is not for me to explain that which is so dark with mystery—I can only speak that which I feel—"

"Speak—you would have me break my Oath, scatter confusion and

shame upon my father's gray hairs, and taint myself with the guilt of unpardonable crime—"

"No, Paul. I would have you as great, as noble as your destiny. I know not the world, have no intelligence of its people or its passing events, but I feel that the time comes, when a strong arm, nerved by a great soul, may grasp a crown, even from the hand of death, and carve a glorious destiny, even from the elements of carnage and ruin."

"It is well—a crown, a throne! But the *hereafter*—" Paul pronounced the word with shuddering distinctness.

"The hereafter?"—and her face was stamped by a vague wonder.

"The Other World, that unknown sea, whose waves break in indistinct murmurs on the shores of this life—" Paul wildly exclaimed—"The Hereafter! O, it is terrible to think, even for a moment, that we are but as the beasts of the field. That to-day we live, and to-morrow we are but loathsome decay. To dream for an instant, that there is no other world—"

"The Other World! It is a mystery; perchance it may be happiness, perchance misery. Or, it may be nothing but a long and dreamless sleep. It is in this world that we live. For this world we were born. I know that I live; the breath of the flowers, the joy of the sun, the thought of moonlight—all are dear to me. But the other world is like a vague mist, stretched over the eastern sky at early dawn. That mist, passing away, may reveal the rising sun, or only disclose a darker cloud!"

Paul started from that lovely countenance with affright. Her words chilled his blood. So beautiful, and with no consciousness of a Better World!

She was an Atheist. It was true. With all her beauty, her grace of step, and magic of look and tone, she had no definite conception of a future state, no actual belief in God. True, she prayed, but it was rather a form of the lips than an inspiration from the heart. Her father, led by his stern fanaticism, had reared her thus, and the end of all his teachings was to impress her only with the joy of existence in this world. The Voice, speaking from the stillness of her chamber, completed this singular education. All that was Religious in her nature, bent from its proper tendency, became distorted into an insane Love, a grasping and boundless Ambition.

That insane Love, that unlimited ambition, were centred in the image of Paul of Ardenheim. She looked upon him as the embodied form of her Thought. He was her Future, her Happiness, her—if we may speak it thus—only Hereafter.

Paul gazed sadly and with fixed eyes upon her glowing face. She was near him; her voice broke like music over the silence of his cell; her bosom swelled beneath the dark robe, and her tresses, agitated by the wind which came through the aperture of the door, waved slowly to and fro.



"Thou art so very beautiful!" he said, completely intoxicated by the strange brightness of her eyes—"Thy face so fair to look upon, thy voice like the delicious music of a daybreak dream, thine eyes shining ever with a light that seems to me like the brightness of a heavenly soul, and yet thou—even thou—"

Shrinking from her gaze, he covered his face with his hands. He had not the courage to complete the sentence. Even this beautiful woman, with the voluptuous form and starry eyes, the voice that thrilled, and the lips that glowed with the warmth of passion, even she must die! This was his thought, but he could not speak it.

Absorbed in his reverie, Paul murmured to himself—"The white bosom to the charnel, the grave worm upon the radiant brow! The voice that thrills will be silent! There will be no light in the face, for that face will be a skull, those eyes but hollow orbits, vacant—dark—sealed forever."

There was a hand upon his shoulder, and Paul heard her voice again. Heard it in every low whispering accent, but could not raise his eyes.

"And thou must die!" This is your thought—"her voice grew tremulous, nay, Paul felt the hand tremble, as it touched his shoulder—"It is true, I must die. But—" and her voice grew firm and strong again, breaking in distinct emphasis on the listener's ear—"But not until my Destiny is accomplished—not until our Fate is fulfilled!"

How the triumph of her voice pierced the listener's ear, and made the blood dance in his veins!

"Life is before us, Paul, a goblet filled to the brim with love, with power. Shall we refuse to drink it, Paul, ay, to the last drop, because the goblet is held by a skeleton hand, or dash it down, untasted, because, as we raise it to our lips, Death stands mocking as he gives the cup?"

Radiant with beauty, she glowed before him, her eyes full of light, her olive cheek glowing with fresh bloom.

"Come, Paul. Do not falter now. To your task. The oath—the injunction of the aged man—these are but a part of the ordeal, which decides your fate and mine. Arise and seek your Destiny!"

She laid her hand upon his arm, yes, upon the key clenched in his right hand.

"I am lost—I tremble—there are Phantom forms before my eyes, and strange music, like a chorus of angel's songs and the laughter of fiends, rings without ceasing in my ears—"

"Do you falter? Up, and know your fate. It is the hour, Paul, when, from the Past and the Future, the shadows will roll aside, as a mist from the dawning day. Pass the threshold—know the mystery of the Sealed Chamber, and—Paul—canst thou not read my thought ere it is spoken—"

"Speak!" Starting from his seat, Paul endeavored to read her meaning in her eyes—

"This room shall be our Bridal Chamber," whispered the Wizard's daughter.

"And the hour of our Bridal—" Paul advanced a single step.

—"When you have passed the Ordeal. I will await you at the threshold of the Sealed Chamber—"

"Our Bridal!" echoed Paul, and grasping the light, he hurried from his room, and in an instant stood in the corridor again

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## CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

### THE THRESHOLD OF THE SEALED CHAMBER.

It was not the moment for calm thought, for every vein swelled with new life, and the heart within him throbbed with such violence, that even in the cold corridor, he panted for breath, for air.

"I will dare the worst, for you—" his voice was indistinct, hoarse with emotion.

With a trembling hand he placed the key in the lock. The Wizard's daughter regarded his ghost-like face with a look of glowing triumph.

"Enter," she softly whispered—"Enter and learn the Past and the Future!"

Paul turned the key—the door began to recede—the heavy air which passed through the crevice, almost extinguished the light. That air seemed tainted with the odor of the dead; it resembled a blast from the unclosed jaws of a charnel.

The Wizard's daughter regarded him with an expanded eye, and love and curiosity mingled in the expression of her beautiful face.

"Do you falter now?" she said.

There was a soft footstep, and a gentle hand raised the hand of the woman from the neck of Paul. Between them glided a young girl, who gathered a dark mantle around her white dress, and with her loosened hair resting in a golden shower upon her shoulders, and her clear blue eyes distended by a look of vague alarm, she gazed now in the face of the voluptuous woman, now in the ashen visage of Paul.

"Catherine!" and he turned away from the innocence and angel-like purity of his sister's face.

"Paul," exclaimed the pure girl, in tones whose calm serenity by no means resembled the impetuous accents of the dark-haired woman—"You stand on the threshold of the Sealed Chamber—"

There was a sad reproof in her gentle eyes.

"The Sealed Chamber—what know you of its mystery?"

"Do you frown upon me, Paul? Are you angry with your sister?—An hour ago, aroused from my sleep by the sound of father's voice, I saw you kneeling at his feet, I heard your vow.—O, Paul, you do not dream of breaking that vow—"

More darkly swelled the serpentine vein upon the forehead of the Wizard's daughter, as she beheld the pure face of Catherine, fired with a holy emotion, as she clung to her Brother's neck.

"He is not your father," she cried—"He has in reserve for you a Future darker even than the Past—"

The mild face of Catherine was turned toward the beautiful woman; her blue eyes shone with wonder and alarm. She shrunk trembling from the light of her flashing eyes.

"This scene fills me with terror, Paul—" whispered the sister, clasping her brother's wrist—"Can it be? You stand on the threshold of the Sealed Chamber, about to violate your oath!"

"Catherine—Catherine—" groaned Paul, as the hand which grasped the key fell nerveless by his side. "I am terribly tempted—my will is not my own—"

He turned wildly from that face, whose blue eyes, fair skin, and golden hair, symbolized a pure and child-like soul, to the dark cheek, flashing eyes, and jet-black hair, which embodied the idea of a proud and voluptuous spirit.

It was the eventful moment of his Fate; the calm love which came like Peace from God, as he looked upon his sister's face, contended with the frenzy of passion which fired every vein, as his glance encountered the gaze of the dark-haired woman.

"Come, Paul—to your own room—it is an Evil Angel that stands so beautiful by your side."

Paul surrendered his hand to the grasp of his sister, and turned his face away from the door.

The eyes of the Wizard's daughter glared with a brightness that was almost preternatural. With one proud step she advanced, her flashing eyes and wildly floating hair, making her look like the spirit of some feverish dream; she grasped his wrist, and pointed to the door, while the dark vein swelled more distinctly from her fair forehead.

"You are afraid!" she sneered, pressing her nether-lip beneath her white teeth, until the blood started—"The door is open, the threshold free, and you are afraid to stand face to face with your Destiny! O, shame upon me, that I ever sank so low, even in my thoughts, as to bestow my love upon a coward heart like thine!"

"Your hand from my neck, sister," shrieked Paul, maddened by the look of the proud maiden—"There is no time for thought. I must go on—"



Grasping the light, which showed his convulsed countenance in every lineament, he dashed over the threshold of the Sealed Chamber.

The door closed behind him, and all was darkness in the corridor.

"Father!" shrieked Catherine, but there was a firm hand upon her mouth, a frenzied arm around her neck.

"Be still, Catherine—" said the fierce though tremulous voice of the strange woman. "It is the dread moment of your brother's fate; be silent therefore, or—"

Catherine struggled but feebly, as that arm wound closer about her neck, while the firm hand rested upon her lips.

"Or, if you must speak, let every word take the form of a prayer. Kneel and beseech the Angels to guide your Brother in his lone communion with his fate!"

All was thick night in the corridor. Catherine could not see the burning eyes of the strange woman, but she felt her writhing heart, as the arm gathered her in a stifling embrace, and trembled as the fevered breath fanned her cheek.

"I will be silent," faltered the Sister—"I will kneel here in the darkness and pray for my lost Brother!"

The strange woman's arm no longer entwined her neck.

Catherine sank on her knees, and folding her arms, looked up to heaven. Even through the gloom and darkness, her pure soul reached out its arms to God.

What pen is there to picture the horror of that moment to the Wizard's daughter.

While her bosom bounded beneath her clasped hands, she muttered in a half-coherent tone, her doubts and hopes mingling in strange confusion:

"He will come forth, with joy on his noble forehead \* \* \* \* Have I advised him to his ruin and shame \* \* \* \* Together we will mount the steep pathway of ambition; he will be noble, and I shall be his bride, his \* \* \* \* A terrible doubt—should the voice deceive \* \* \* \* All is still—I hear no sound \* \* \* a cry—silence—a groan \* \* \* Paul! Paul! \* \* \* No answer! Ah, this will kill me—I can endure it no longer. Better die a thousand deaths than be tortured by suspense so horrible!"

And while the voluptuous girl murmured her hopes and fears, in accents tremulous and broken, the pure Sister kneeling at her feet, prayed to Heaven in a calm voice.

The voice of the old clock rolled through the Block-house, and "Five!" pealed from the bell.

There was no sound within the Sealed Chamber; Catherine ceased to pray, and bent her head against its panels, but could not hear the slightest echo.

The proud girl too, sweeping her hair aside from her face, listened in

voiceless agony, listened for the accent of her lover's voice, for the echo of his step. All was still.

"Paul!" cried the gentle voice of Catherine.

"Paul!" spoke the trembling accent of the Wizard's daughter.

No answer! Within the Sealed Chamber silence and mystery—in the corridor darkness and suspense—it was an hour of unutterable anguish.

At last there was a sound—Catherine uttered a prayer, and the dark-haired woman an exclamation of joy.

It was a groan of agony, and yet they were glad to hear it. Glad to know that he lived!

"A footstep—he comes—" cried the Wizard's daughter.

It was a footstep, but unsteady and irregular as that of a man who, bewildered by wine, reels from the hot air of the revel, into the cool, fresh atmosphere of dawn.

The door unclosed, and Paul Ardenheim appeared on the threshold. In one hand the light, in the other the key.

Catherine sank on the floor with a cry of horror. Even the woman with dark hair and proudly voluptuous bosom, staggered backward, and leaned for support against the opposite wall of the corridor. She buried her face in her hands, while the insensible form of Catherine lay at her feet.

The face of Paul Ardenheim thrilled the Wizard's daughter with a feeling of horror, beyond all power of language to define or analyze.

She heard the key turn in the lock, but could not raise her face from her hands. He was passing near her—his wild unsteady step awoke the echoes—yet, winding the hair about her face, she shrunk closer to the wall, afraid of his touch.

He was gone—she heard the echo of his footstep far down the corridor—shuddering she turned her face over her shoulder. She saw him as he hurried along; his back was toward her; the light shone over his long dark hair, but did not reveal his face.

He was near the end of the corridor—she saw the light shining upon the face of the old clock, when the sound of an opening door was heard, and a white-haired man came forth and stood in the path of Paul Ardenheim.

"Back, old man!" The Wizard's daughter heard the voice, saw the extended arm, and all was darkness. The light had been hurled to the floor.

By its last gleam, she beheld the old man's white hairs waving round his forehead, as he tottered backward, while his face glowed redly for a moment, and then with a dull sound he fell.

## CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

## THE CORSE OF MADELINE.

"VERY beautiful!" said the Wizard—"Even in the last moment, when the soul hangs fluttering on the motionless lips!"

His voice, deepened by enthusiasm, awoke the echoes of the subterranean vault.

The pale spiritual light, shining from the aperture in the top of the altar, bathed his face in its rays, while all around was shadowy, and the farther corners of the cell were wrapt in thick darkness.

In that light, his features were marked and impressive. His form bending with age and care, made his face appear as though it rested in the centre of his shrunken chest. Covered with wrinkles, the lines deeply traced, and the high forehead surmounted by a black skull-cap, from which the hair escaped in straight flakes of silvery whiteness, the face of Isaac Van Behme bore the stamp of a fanaticism, that was to terminate only with his existence. The eyes—in color now blue, now deepening into gray—were expanded beneath the white brow, with a wild, unearthly stare. Around his thin lips trembled a smile of inexpressible joy.

Clad in a loosely flowing gown, with his pale hands, with long attenuated fingers, clasped upon his breast, the old man stood near the altar; and as the light imparted a rosy flush, his face appeared ten years younger; but when it cast a glare of faint azure, he looked like a phantom, a Demon summoned to his task of evil,—like any thing but a living man.

His eyes, dilating with rapture, were downcast—

"It was a brave thought, right brave, by my soul!" he murmured, with a burst of shrill laughter—"To use the horse of friend Dorfner, and place her form upon it, and thus convey her to my home! The horse I turned down the path by the stream—Dorfner will wonder much when he seeks his horse to-morrow!—Wherefore did the Huntsman strike that blow and pierce her naked breast? Jealousy, I ween—"Twas a good star that led me to her side, just as the hunter struck the blow and fled, with the bloody knife in his hand—a most propitious star! But I must not delay—look! How the soul flutters as it is about to take its flight!"

Near the altar a rough pine board was placed, supported by two rudely constructed tressels.

On this board was laid the form of a naked woman, whose outlines were distinctly defined, amid the shadows of the vault. The light shone mildly over the image of sinless purity, revealing the hands stretched by the side, the limbs disposed in the serene attitude of the grave, the face



wearing a calm smile, the eyelids closed, and the colorless cheeks relieved by soft brown hair, which descended over the neck and shoulders. A single lock strayed over the edge of the board and dangled on the floor.

It was like a form of pure white marble, warming into heavenly life, under the chisel of some inspired sculptor—so fair, so pale, so beautiful!

The face was pale, but a single spot of intense red burned in the centre of each cheek, like a rose-bud peeping from the snow.

Beneath the bosom was a hideous stain of crimson—it was blood flowing from a fatal wound, and spreading imperceptibly over the rough board on which the unconscious form was laid.

Poor Madeline!

There may have been no mercy in the eye of your Seducer, when he gloated upon your half-revealed breast, but the cold eye that now gazes upon your uncovered form—is there any thing of pity in that fixed and icy glare?

Her nether-lip moves gently, almost imperceptibly, and a slight pulsation stirs the bleeding breast.

“She lives! The great Secret is within my grasp—‘one drop of blood, warm from the heart of a tempted but sinless maiden,’ will reward me for these gray hairs—for the toil of twenty-one years,—and ripen the liquid, now simmering within the altar, into the Elixir of Immortal Life. It is a glorious thought! Blessed be the Star that shines upon me at this still hour!”

Isaac examined the wound, which covered the lower part of Madeline’s breast with blood; his face became rigid in every outline as he pursued his painful scrutiny.

“The wound is not fatal!” he said, with an accent of profound regret—“The knife glanced aside. The hand that struck the blow was tremulous—with a little care, the maiden might recover, and go forth in youth and loveliness again.”

Isaac was silent. His brow became corrugated, his mouth distorted by an almost grotesque grimace. He was occupied with dark and dangerous thoughts. “Shall I falter now? When my footstep is on the threshold of Eden, and the fruit of Immortal Life within my grasp? And yet \* \* \* a Murder \* \* \* the world would cover my gray hairs with scorn, the law consign me to the gibbet \* \* \* not a child but would curse my name. Yet, with the sacrifice of this *one life*, I may give life, knowledge to thousands, and raise mankind to godlike power. Only a life,—a single life—now fluttering on these lips—only this, between me and Eternal Youth!”

More dark and singular grew the expression of Isaac’s face. His down-drawn brows almost concealed the cold, icy glare of his eyes; his mouth worked convulsively.

He glanced over the unconscious form, and saw the bosom swelling

with the first warm throb of returning life, while the rose-bud on the cheek began to spread into perfect bloom.

"I will get my scalpel," said Isaac—"It is in the Tower. There is no time to be lost!"

Not once did he pause to contemplate the actual dangers of his position. Might not the body of Madeline be traced to his home, and the guilt of Murder be laid upon his gray hairs? This might occur before another hour, but the old man did not for a moment pause to think of it.

"There is no time to be lost!" he said, and while the bosom throbbed slowly, and the rose-bud bloomed into a ripe flower, he hurried along the floor and from the cell.

Five minutes elapsed ere the sound of his returning step aroused the echoes of the vault.

"The day is breaking, the day whose setting sun shall shine upon the brow of an immortal being!" Thus muttering, the old man came from the gloom toward the altar, whose light—suddenly changed from soft red to faint azure—invested his agitated face with an unearthly glare.

"Too much time has been lost already —— it is but the sacrifice of a life, and——"

Brandishing a scalpel or dissecting-knife in his upraised hand, he stood in the pale blue light again, beside the altar in which the fire burned; the sacred fire, that, in the long watch of a lifetime, had never once gone out, or even been dimmed by the loss of one pure ray.

The cry of anguish which came from Isaac's lips would have pierced a heart of stone.

There was the rough board, stained with a small pool of blood, but the body of Madeline was gone.

The Wizard's uplifted arm fell by his side; his face betrayed the death-like stupor which palsied his reason, and crushed his stern fanaticism into a dull apathy.

He pressed his hands upon the board, and stained his fingers in the blood—

"It is a delusion. The body is here, but mine eyesight is dim. No footstep but mine and that of David the Idiot has ever crossed the threshold of this vault—it cannot, cannot have been taken away by human hands!"

With mad shrieks, gestures as frantic, the old man ran to and fro, now lost to sight in the dark corners of the place, now tearing his thin locks, while the light disclosed his horror-stricken features. In vain were all his frantic cries, in vain his earnest search—the body of the wounded girl was nowhere to be seen.

How had she disappeared? Whose hands had borne her form from the vault?

Isaac hurried from the place, while the dark passages echoed his frantic cries. It was the work of a moment to ascend the stairway and attain the ground-floor of the mansion. The lantern shone dimly from the corridor at the head of the main stairway. Without an instant's delay, Isaac hastened up the stairway, and reached the door of his daughter's room. He listened for a moment, pushed it open, and crossed the threshold.

The hanging lamp shed a faint light over the room, glimmering on the surface of the mirror, and imparting a grotesque outline to the curtains of the bed.

For a moment Isaac bent his head and listened. A death-like stillness reigned. Rushing to the bed, he dashed aside the hangings and extended his hand through the shadows. That withered hand rested upon a warm cheek, and the regular breathing of an untroubled sleeper came gently to the old man's ear.

"It is well! My daughter slumbers—she cannot by any chance have——"

With the sentence unfinished, the old man turned away, and hurried from the room, closing the door with a sudden crash.

Scarcely had the echo of his footsteps died away, when a face appeared amid the cumbrous hangings, and, by the faint light, the large lustrous eyes and fair forehead, darkened by a swollen vein, were seen.

"He does not suspect my absence—Ah! My heart throbs as though it would burst. How I shuddered, as, standing in the darkness of the hall, only a moment since, I saw him go down into the secret cells of the mansion!"

And the Wizard's daughter, attired in her velvet robe, with the hood drawn over her hair, rose from the bed, and slowly paced the floor.

"Had I been a moment later, all would have been discovered—O, it is indeed fortunate that I returned in time to fling myself beneath the coverlet, ere my father came to my bedside! Had I been absent, when his extended hand sought to press my cheek——"

The proud girl shuddered, for there was something in the icy manner and lonely life of the old man, which impressed her heart more with awe than love.

Then, as she paced the floor, she suffered her dark hair to float loosely over her shoulders, while her thoughts, only half-uttered, still centred upon her lover—

"Paul! He will come—perchance within the hour—would that I could unravel the mystery of that fatal room! Did he strike the old man to the floor? I cannot tell, for his face—"

She shuddered at the memory.

"In the darkness I left the Block-house, and hurried through the silent woods to my home. And Paul—where does he wander now? Would that he were here, his hand linked in mine, his lip upon mine own! Then,



even in the midst of our dream of love, we would plan the glorious Future, and read the bright landscape of the coming years, with the eye of Prophecy."

Do not smile at the passionate extravagance of the proud girl, who, reared from infancy in the silence of these forests—alone with her enthusiast father—afar from the great world—has been taught, by a Voice that speaks from the air, to love the mysterious Paul of Ardenheim, to invest his face with the mad idolatry of a boundless passion!

Wild in her passion, extravagant in her words, she is yet surpassingly beautiful, and might walk among the coronetted dames of a royal court, and not feel abashed amid the noblest or the fairest of them all.

One hand rested upon her bosom—it was firmly clenched. Her small foot beat the floor with a nervous motion. The serpentine vein started in black distinctness from her forehead, and, with her hair floating along her olive cheeks, she stood in the centre of her chamber, near the light, like a statue of some dread though beautiful Angel.

"What means this singular agitation of my father? He cannot—no! no! Yet wherefore seek my chamber at the dead of night? It was but an impulse of fatherly love.—Paul! Will he ever return?"

She crossed the floor with that proud step, which added a wild charm to the voluptuous beauty of her shape, and, standing in the casement, saw the first blush of the coming day, glowing softly over the dark woods. The rays of the lamp and the flush of the dawn mingled, and created a light at once uncertain and spectral.

"Hast thou beheld him?" a low, musical voice, started the Wizard's daughter from her reveries.

It is the Voice—"ejaculated the ambitious girl—"I have beheld him."

"Did he enter the Sealed Chamber? Had he the firmness to look the Future in the face?"

He entered the Sealed Chamber," exclaimed the Wizard's child.

"Didst thou see him come forth again?"

"I did—" she covered her face with her hands, and trembled at the memory of that Face.

"Where is he now?"

"I know not! Speak to me and answer!" and, with her brow darkened by a frown, the girl advanced to the centre of the room—"It is my turn to question, yours to reply. Hast thou not spoken falsely? Hast thou not cheated my soul with an idle delusion? If thou art indeed a voice from some good Angel who watches over the strange course of my life, then tell me at once the mystery of that Sealed Chamber! Wherefore that awful countenance? wherefore the arm extended and the blow? Where is he now, this Paul of Ardenheim, whose life is linked with mine own?"

It was a singular thing to see the proud girl, gazing upon the vacant

air, as she thus boldly questioned the Voice whose source was invisible, whose purpose incomprehensible

There was a pause ; no answer came.

The Wizard's daughter placed her hand upon her forehead, and with her finger pressed the swollen vein.

"All will be made known to thee in time!" was the response of the Voice, uttered in a tone of profound sadness.

"Ah—it is a delusion. I am dreaming. Yes, reared afar from the world, I have become the victim of my own fancies. I have oftentimes read of madness—am I not a wretched maniac, an object of pity and loathing?"

"Thou art not the victim of idle frenzy, but the child of a glorious Destiny. Be patient, and all will be well.—*Hast thou ever dared to penetrate the recesses of thy father's most secret cell?*"

This last question, uttered in a tone that seemed affected by sudden emotion, startled the beautiful girl, with involuntary surprise.

"Never!" she replied.

"Hast thou not this very night crossed the sacred threshold of that cell? Pause and reflect. Do not speak falsely, for more than life depends upon your answer."

"I have never crossed that threshold—" was the firm answer of the wondering maiden.

The Voice was heard no more.

While the kiss of day grew rosier on the eastern sky, the girl remained motionless and pale in the centre of her chamber, listening in speechless intensity for the accents of that Voice, but no sound awoke the echoes. All was still and breathless. Her face was very pale, the serpentine vein upon her forehead very dark and distinct, as she turned toward her couch.—

Meanwhile, the Wizard, after a fruitless search through every nook and recess of his mansion, returned again to the silence and dim radiance of his earth-hidden cell. Advancing to the altar, he started as he beheld a dark form crouching at his feet.

"The Idiot here! Wretch! Hast thou dared to cross this threshold unbidden?"

He spurned the hunchback with his foot—

"Arise, and answer me! Didst thou remove the body of the dead girl?"

While his thin features glowed with rage, he gazed upon the shapeless form of the Deformed, and once more pressed his foot upon his neck. Black David slowly rose, and with the tangled hair drooping over his features, confronted the old man.

"Eh! Measter?" he muttered—"Dost touch Black David with thy foot?"

Art angry, Measter? Have a care—Black David's brain is thick—but his arm is strong. Measter must not strike him in anger."

The Wizard saw the angry light of the hunchback's eye, and took him kindly by the hand—

"Pardon, David, pardon—I am sore distressed. The great hope of my life is crushed—but you cannot comprehend me. Speak to me, David—it grieves me that I was angry with you—speak, my friend. Didst thou remove the body of the dead woman? Tell me where thou hast hidden it, and all shall be forgotten. Ha, ha, you merry knave! You thought you would frighten your old master—is it so?"

"Dead body?" growled Black David—"I know nothing of your dead bodies. I was asleep—and thou didst spurn me with 'ee foot—"

Sullenly the Deformed turned away, leaving the old man alone by the altar.

"He has not taken her away—" muttered Isaac—"It is plainly to be seen that the poor idiot has had no part in this deed—"

And while the Wizard, standing near the altar, murmured these words, the Deformed leaned against one of the pillars of the vault, and placed his hands upon his face—

"This hope has failed me. The body of Madeline is gone—I know not whither. Isaac cannot tell—his anguish is too deep to be feigned. His daughter, too———Ah! that in planning so much of evil to others, I only bring evil to myself!"

Isaac heard the voice of the Deformed, and, turning from the altar, exclaimed—

"Come hither, Black David. Art angry with me?"

He took the hand of the hunchback within his own, and led him toward the light.

"Why man, dost thou cherish malice? Again I tell thee that it grieves me that I was angered with thee. Hah! What is this—a tear!—"

A scalding tear fell on his hand as he spoke; and even through the tangled hair, he saw that the face of the hunchback was bathed in moisture.

"Dost weep? Art angry with me still?" again repeated the old man, an expression of compassion softening his rigid lineaments.

But the Deformed dashed his hand aside, and glided into the shadows of the cell.

The silence which ensued was scarcely broken by a sound, while half an hour elapsed. The pale face of the Wizard looked haggard and spectral by the light of the altar-flame. He stood clasping his hands and gazing vacantly toward the light, every lineament impressed with despair.

The Deformed was lost in the shadows; his sorrow, too deep for utterance or for tears, was buried in the profound gloom of the cell.

At last a sound disturbed the stillness. Its unearthly emphasis came through closed doors and thick walls, and broke upon the silence of the



cell, like the groan of a dying man, choked by the hand of a foe ; a hand which pressed the white lips and smothered the last cry of life, ere it was uttered. Low, indistinct muttering, that sound pierced the thick walls ; it seemed to the Wizard as though the old mansion was suddenly endued with life ; as though he heard the throbings of its heart.

The Wizard's daughter approached the bed. Parting the curtains, she suffered the light to penetrate the gloom which hung over her couch. Very beautiful she looked as she laid aside her robe of velvet and fur, and suffered the dark hair to stream freely over her bosom. With the name of Paul upon her lips, she sank upon the pillow, drawing close the curtains, so that no ray of light might break the gloom of the sacred retreat.

Soon she resigned herself to slumber ; but in her slumber there came a dream of a shadowy path, leading far down into the nooks of a summer wood. There were threads of sunshine quivering over the sod ; flowers peeped from the vines that trailed among the branches ; the murmur of trees, and birds, and streams, woven together, fell on her senses like the blessing of good angels. But suddenly, from the flowers which, trembling from the vines, overarched her way with bloom and fragrance, projected the head and fangs of a beautiful serpent. She started away with horror, but an inexplicable fascination drew her near and nearer to the snake, whose skin of bright green was varied by drops of gold. A dreamy music issued from its expanded jaws ; there was a strange fascination in its eyes. Unable to advance or recede, she stood spell-bound, when the serpent sprang from the leaves, and buried its fangs in her bosom. She saw the blood, she felt the coil of the snake about her neck, and——

The dream was gone, but in its place, a terrible reality. Buried in the pillow, with her couch shrouded by the hangings, she felt a hand upon her breast, and heard the sound of deep-drawn breath. Her blood grew cold ; she could not speak or move ; the overwhelming terror held her dumb.

The hand was there—she heard the deep-drawn breath—and panted for air, as though the chamber was filled with the atmosphere of pestilence.

She would have given the world for the power to move or speak ; there was something fearful in the darkness which encompassed her, in the cold hand which pressed her bosom, in the deep-drawn breath which was heard distinctly through the stillness. Her senses were deadened by a sudden stupor, which, while it left her without speech or motion, also left her painfully conscious of the cold hand laid upon her breast. \* \* \* \*

By a violent effort, she dashed aside the curtains of her bed—all was dark in her chamber. The curtains, closed over the window, shut out the light of the dawning day ; the hanging lamp was extinguished. As

she rose in the couch, the hand which had rested upon her bosom, pressed her neck—she was nerved by despair and terror—with one frenzied motion, she sprang from the bed.

Standing thus in the shadows of her chamber, her form, only half-covered, quivering with cold, she gazed toward the bed, whose outlines were but faintly distinguishable, and listened for that almost inaudible sound of deep-drawn breath. She heard it once more—it seemed like the gasping of a death-stricken man.

Then her terror found utterance in a shriek which pierced every nook and chamber of the old mansion.

Trembling in the centre of the room, afraid to move toward the bed or toward the window, the light of the dawn growing stronger every moment, she looked fixedly toward the bed. Was it a fancy? Did she indeed behold a white arm extended from the shadows of the bed?

There came a light, a red light, somewhat obscured by heavy smoke,—it flashed from the opened door, and disclosed that half-naked form, the face unnaturally pale and the eyes bright with preternatural fear.

The maiden turned toward the door, and by the sudden light beheld the pale visage of her father, glowing in every line with singular triumph. Over his shoulder appeared the face of the Deformed, the eyes shining with supernatural lustre from the shadows of the matted hair.

And then, turning her gaze from the door, as she beheld the eyes of her father and the Deformed enchained by some object near her, the Maiden beheld—not the image of Paul Ardenheim, nor yet some hideous spectre summoned by blasphemous rites from the shadows of the Other World.

It was a naked form, with arms folded over the blood-stained breast, with brown hair waving freely, in glossy curls, over the white shoulders; eyes uplifted, wet with tears, gazed in the face of the Wizard's child, and a voice broken by the very intensity of fear, thrilled on the silence—

“Save me! Save me! For I have no friend, no hope but in you—”

It was Madeline, the Orphan Girl of Wissahikon.

## E P I S O D E .

FROM JANUARY, 1775, TO JUNE, 1777.

Two years pass away. The Manuscripts from which this history is taken have not a word to say in regard to the period that elapsed from the first of January, 1775, until some time in June, 1777. A shadow rests upon the history of the Wissahikon during that period—a shadow unbroken by a solitary ray.

Not a word of the fate of Paul, nor of the Wizard's child, nor of Madeline, the orphan girl,—there is silence and night upon the Wissahikon, while these years pass away.

The Manuscript speaks in full and terrible details of the last night of 1774; but after that night—so crowded with incident and fate—is over, there is a blank until June, 1777. It is therefore in June, 1777, that we are to take up again the broken thread of our narrative.

From the 1st of January, 1775, to June, 1777,—who shall dare write the history of that time, not in regard to the Wissahikon and its people, but in relation to the American Continent?

Two years and six months!—In times of peace, when traffic freezes every noble pulsation of man into a dull torpor, or only excites the soul into a feverish lust for gold, this space of time might pass, without one event more glorious than a rise in the price of dry-goods, or one thought higher than the cobwebs of the counting-house.

But this was no time for mere men of traffic, nor was it an age for puny politicians. It was the time of men; the age of noble thoughts; the epoch of deeds inspired by God.

When the year 1775 began, a Continent lay trembling in suspense, its happiness or its ruin hanging upon the changes of a crowned Idiot's health. The destiny of three millions, the fate of hundreds of millions, yet unborn, depended upon the health of an Idiot. It looks absurd, but it is true.

Behold him, ranging the half-lighted corridor of yonder palace, his receding forehead impressed with the curse which hangs upon his race, his eye glassy and vacant, his nether-lip trembling in a meaningless



smile. There are beautiful pictures on those lofty walls; the light streams through windows which are shadowed by curtains of silk and gold; before and behind the wandering Idiot are ranges of lofty chambers, furnished with every thing that can please a royal eye, or wake a royal soul from the torpor of satiety into one quick pulse of sensation.

There is Royalty in the very atmosphere; Royalty glares upon him in the sunshine; it broods in the silence of those great and shadowy rooms; and the Idiot wandering from room to room, from corridor to corridor, is King of England—King of the eighth part of the World; the Arbiter of the fate of America, and its three millions of people!

Is the crowned Idiot cheerful to-day? Then a few guineas are given to the beggars who clamor in the kennels near his palace gates, and an army of licensed cut-throats is hurried over the waters, to crush the three millions of America into silence and slavery.

Is he gloomy? Has the last prescription of the royal physician failed to quicken his blood, and clear the fog of his brain? Has the curse of his reason developed itself in grotesque forms? Does he see foul reptiles creeping over the rich carpet at his feet, or behold himself encircled by a throng of hideous phantoms?

Then woe to America! woe to Ireland! woe to Man! For at once, in obedience to the commands of this poor wretch, who is more miserable with his crown, than the vilest leper of St. Giles with his rags, armies hurry to and fro, crushing into dust, into blood, the hopes of millions of mankind.

The Ministers of State are listening near the door of the Idiot's chamber; they are awaiting for his commands. Upon the words which fall from his lips, hangs the fate of England, Ireland, Scotland, America; the fate of one-eighth of the entire globe.

For he is King. KING! Pursued by the curse which has descended from age to age upon his race; frightened in his royal chambers by the phantoms of a maniac's frenzy; afraid of the motes that float in the sun; afraid of the shadow on the wall, he is yet a King; and the drivelling of his Idiot's lip is law and fate to some hundred millions of souls.

Beautiful picture of the divine right of Kings!

These fits of frenzy, this torpor of idiotic vacancy, which by turns possess the Monarch, are known only to the few who are admitted to his privacy; known only to some nine or ten persons in a hundred millions.

Yet he is King, by Grace of God too, commissioned by Heaven to tax, and murder, and maim the human race, to convert whole nations into sepulchres, and drain the life-blood from a million hearts.

And yet they tell us that there is no beauty in Royalty, nothing sublime in the atmosphere inhaled by Kings!

In all the pages of history, there is no picture which for a moment will compare with this solitary Fact:—

In 1775, George, the grandson of George the Second, was King of England; that is to say, King of England, Scotland, Ireland, America, and India. He was thirty-eight years of age. He was subject to moments of unutterable gloom; now threatened with madness, now torpid with blank idiocy. Of this fact, his subjects knew nothing; if a vague rumor crept abroad, it was crushed at once, as a blasphemy. *In lucid intervals, that is to say, when idiocy quickened for an instant into thought, or madness became for a moment calm, he governed the eighth part of the world, and decided the fate of the millions who then existed, and stamped his impress upon the fate of hundreds of millions yet unborn.*

Is it not a beautiful thought?

Summon all the horrors of history; crowd into one page the accumulated crimes of a thousand years, and still you have nothing half so horrible as this solitary fact—that an Idiot, whose idiocy is unknown to the world, should decide, by the drivellings of his idiocy, the fate of millions of immortal souls; souls born of God, redeemed by Christ; every one as precious in the sight of Heaven as the soul of any King that ever lived.

O for a high mass, chanted by devils, amid the carnage of a battle-field, in honor of the Divine Right of Kings!

It was this Idiot King who, in 1775, held in his hand—under the royal pen, agitated by the tremors of lunacy—the fate of America.

At his command, the leper of the jail and the cut-throat of St. Giles, the starved wretch of the factory, and the peasant of the field—all assumed the scarlet uniform, took sword and bayonet, were disciplined into all the minute details of murder, and sent over the ocean to assert the Divine Right of the King among the valleys of the New World.

Wherefore? Because the people of the New World refused to pay a tax, or would not do obeisance to the petty ministers who encircled the petty King? No. This does not comprise the whole truth of the contest. It was, in a word, because King George of England wished to bind the land of the New World to his crown, as his property, his own especial domain, subject to every impulse of his will, and to the caprices of all Kings—Idiots or Murderers—who might come after him.

The people of America did not recognise with any favor this idea of the King.

Therefore, roughly clad in the garb of farmer and mechanic, they met the vassals of the King, on a pleasant day in April, 1775, and shot them from the shelter of the hedge by the roadside, and confronted them in the centre of the highway, opposing their rude fowling-pieces to the glittering arms of the royal soldiers.

The day was April 19th, and the place was Lexington.

The blood, smoking on the roadside and in the fields of Lexington, spoke to the hearts of millions, and roused a people into arms.

It was on the 10th of May, 1775, that a band of farmers and mechanics, with here and there a lawyer or a rich man, assembled in Philadelphia, and were known as the Continental Congress. This congress, with professions of love for the King, coupled scorn for his Ministers, and resistance to his laws. They were yet in that twilight which descends upon the souls of men, just before the daybreak of freedom. Joined to England by ties of ancestry, by the language of Shakspeare and Milton, by English customs and English laws, they trembled at the idea of a separate destiny. They were afraid of independence.

And while the Congress of the New World was in session in Philadelphia, there came to Boston another British Army, sent by the British King—in one of his lucid intervals perchance—and with this army were gallant soldiers, Clinton, Burgoyne and Howe. This was on the 25th of May, 1775.

But, on a clear starry night in June, there were shadows moving on the hill and along the shore; there were boats upon the waves, and the subdued tread of armed men broke through the stillness. Then there was, all at once, the peal of musquetry mingled with the hurrah of conflict;—there were smoke-clouds rolling into the sky, like shrouds for the dead;—there was fighting on the hill-top, where peasants, behind a bank of mud, levelled whole lines of splendid soldiers into dust;—there was a brave young man, named Warren, who grappled the bayonet that stabbed him, and poured forth his blood upon the grass as a holy oblation unto freedom.

The British were driven back, defeated and mocked by a peasant army, encamped near Boston, on the heights of Bunker Hill.

That word, Bunker Hill, coupled with the name of Warren, spoke like the voice of God to the Continental Congress and to the people of the Thirteen Provinces.

Blood had been shed; Lexington found an echo in Bunker Hill; there was no time for hesitation; no thought of submission.

The Congress determined to raise an army. Where should a leader be found? The British King had generals of renown, who were skilled in shedding blood, perfect in the art of leading uniformed slaves to deeds of Murder. But where should the Continental Congress find a leader for their peasant army?

It was a question of awful moment. There was no time for hesitation, however, and the eyes of the farmers and mechanics, the rich men and the lawyers, who composed the Continental Congress, were turned towards one of their number. He was a man of forty-three years of age. His stature was commanding; his face full of energy and fire. He was a man to be remarked in a crowd of ten thousand. Not often did he speak, but his words were concise and to the point—every word embodied an idea, and overwhelmed with its truth the hearts of all who



listened. This man, plainly attired in the garb of a planter, was chosen as the Leader of the Continental armies. He sat listening to a speech, which rung in words of fire from the lips of bold John Adams, and the last word of the speech was his own name. Covered with blushes, the Planter fled from the Hall of Congress; but soon the people of Thirteen Provinces recognized their champion in the person of this Virginian Planter, and King George—may be in one of his lucid intervals—heard, for the first time, the name of George Washington.

Then began the epoch of illustrious deeds. The young Commander Washington, secluded in his tent near Cambridge, surveyed the map of the New World, and laid his sword upon it, the hilt resting upon Labrador, while the point touched Patagonia, thus symbolizing the great purpose of his soul—the possession of the Continent of freemen.

From this camp near Cambridge went, one autumn day, a man who was bold enough to think of the conquest of Canada. He was followed by eleven hundred men. He was determined to traverse three hundred miles of untrodden wilderness with this little army, and then attack the Gibraltar of America, the rock of Quebec. He did traverse the wilderness; ice, snow, trackless ravines, impetuous torrents, days of starvation, and nights of hopeless extremity—all these he dared, he and his band of iron men.

On the last night of 1775, he stood on the rock of Quebec, under a leaden sky, his uniform whitened by the fast-falling snow. He took by the hand a youthful soldier, whose handsome face was contrasted with the bold outlines of his own visage. They plighted faith together; they swore to meet in Quebec in victory or in death. On the rock which had borne, not fifteen years before, the corpses of Montcalm and Wolfe, the little army of Continentals prepared to attack and possess Quebec. This was when the daybreak was yet faint and dark, while the St. Lawrence, heaving sullenly under rocks of ice, was whitened by the falling snow.

When the day was bright, and the sun shone vividly over the City and rock, covered by frozen snow, there was a mangled body amid five other corpses on Cape Diamond. It was the wreck of the youthful soldier, Richard Montgomery.

There were heaps of dead by the St. Charles; dismal stains of blood upon the barriers; corpses and wounded in the dark streets of Quebec. There was the soldier of the wilderness, covered with wounds, and fighting as he sank upon the frozen snow, fighting on, until his sight was dim, his arm stiffened. His name was Benedict Arnold.

The attack was glorious, though unsuccessful; the Americans did not possess the town, but they won another name. To Bunker Hill and Lexington they added Quebec. These names are greater than armies in a good cause.

And all the while, as the hand and brain of Washington gave impulse

to the Continental armies, as battle after battle added to the list of King George's victims, and the smoke of the conflict ascended to heaven, with the souls of the dead, the Americans were fighting, not for Independence, but for a change in the British Ministry. They were still afraid of that word, Independence.

While Arnold fell covered with wounds, and Montgomery lay a crushed and bloody image upon the rock of Quebec, there was a battle fighting in another part of the Continent. It was a fearful battle. It was not a battle fought with musquet and cannon, or with scalping-knife and tomahawk; nor were armies of men called up on gory fields, opposed to each other's throats, and set upon each other like rabid beasts, in this contest.

No! It was a battle fought by one man, his only weapons a quill, some sheets of paper, and a bottle of ink.

While Arnold was bleeding in Quebec, this man was sitting in a garret in Philadelphia, surveying certain loose sheets of paper, which were crowded with the intense workings of his brain for the last six months. From June until December, he had been engaged in this battle; that is to say, he had been embodying upon those loose sheets of paper, an idea which would work more judgment, more ruin for King George, than all the armies of the world.

While the last groan of Montgomery arose to God from the dark rock of Quebec, this man in the Philadelphia garret gazed upon his manuscripts, and, with a brightening eye, beheld the idea which was to conquer King George embodied in a single word.

Soon the news of Quebec came to Philadelphia, and soon the manuscripts of the unknown, poured into the alembic of the printing-press, appeared in the shape of a Book.

The name of that Book was in itself a Battle. To Bunker Hill, Ticonderoga, Lexington, Quebec, the American people now added the name of the book, "COMMON SENSE."

The Idea of that book entered Congress, and spoke to the hearts of the great men there, and awed the little men into silence. To Jefferson, to Adams, to Franklin, to Sherman, and to all who were like them, the idea spoke in the still small voice of a Truth, armed with the omnipotence of God.

At last the Idea fought its battle in the hall of Congress, and it became embodied forever in the word, INDEPENDENCE.

On a calm summer evening, the 9th of July, 1776, the Continental troops encamped near New York, were informed by their General, that the American Congress had declared these Colonies to be Free and Independent States.

The names grew on the scroll of American glory. Another name, enshrining a thought even as body does a soul, was added to Lexington,

Bunker Hill, Quebec, Common Sense. It was a name that was the result of all the other names, and the embodiment of all—Independence.

The King of England, in one of his lucid intervals, heard of this word, proclaimed from the Council Hall of the New World, and chorused by the battle-cries of Armies. Even as Pharaoh of a more ancient kingdom, grew more blind and drunk with fury, as the hour of God's judgments came near and nearer, so King George vented his royal rage in new measures, new armies, new assassinations.

It was toward the close of 1776, that the darkest cloud gathered over the Idea of a Nation. "Independence" seemed doomed to vanish in mists of blood. There was ice upon the Delaware, near Trenton. Did this ice freeze into one compact mass, and spread a firm pathway from shore to shore? Then the cause of the New World was lost. Upon so slight a fact hung the destiny of Washington and the cause.

For, on the eastern shore of the river, was the British Army, strong in arms, in discipline, very comfortable, with well-spread tables and fine apparel.

On the western shore, with a mob of half-clad men, was Washington, with scarce a place in which to lay his head, scarce a roof to shelter his starving soldiers. To nakedness and starvation, hovering like spectres about his camp, was added a sadder and darker phantom—Treason.

Upon the freezing of the Delaware, therefore, depended the fate of Washington and the cause. The river once frozen from shore to shore, these Britons and Hessians, cozily encamped in Trenton, will cross on the ice, and make an easy prey of the starving mob who skulk along the western hills.

There was a God in Heaven, at this dark hour, and Washington did not despair. His men suffering from hunger and cold, Treason scowling upon his camp, Congress almost hopeless of the cause, Washington did not despair. He even wished to add another name to Bunker Hill, Lexington, Quebec, Common Sense, Independence.

Therefore, some time in the dark hours of Christmas Night, he placed his starving men in boats. He besought them to look to the priming of their guns, and keep their powder dry. That is, such of them as had guns and powder. Those who were destitute of powder and guns, almost destitute of rags, took such arms as they could find—perchance a broken sword, maybe a rusted bayonet.

While the British and the Hessians were combating legions of turkeys, parallelograms of roast beef, and hogsheads of ale,—cozily keeping their drunken Christmas in Trenton—Washington came upon them with his starving mob.—Ere the dawn was bright, another name was written beside Bunker Hill, Lexington, Quebec, Common Sense and Independence.

TRENTON!

And thus, enlivened now and then by a sudden glare, the dreary Night



of Revolution passed on. The day was to brighten at last, but there were still many dark hours between Washington and the light of perfect freedom.

It is June, 1777. How stands the cause of freedom now?

We may not enter into all the details of the history of our land; let us compress some events of the Future into pictures. June is now in blossom—what says the autumn and the winter, of the cause of freedom?

—Gaze along this meadow, embosomed in the foliage of a lovely valley, gemmed with orchards, and sparkling with a stream of clear cold water. There is sunshine upon the tops of the trees, and shadow all around. From clusters of forest trees, gray stone walls are visible; the walls of peaceful homes, protected by the solitude of this world-hidden valley. Is it not one of those scenes which speak to the soul of quiet—peace—unutterable peace—and mock the petty greatness of wealth, the swelling vanity of ambition, to scorn?

And this peaceful valley, secluded from the world, shut up in its own loveliness, will soon be rich in graves. There will be cold faces in the light of a setting sun; the grass will be wet with a bloody rain; the stream crimson. And this will be, ere the blossoms on yonder trees have ripened into fruit.

For it is the valley of the BRANDYWINE.

There is a house of dark gray stone, standing in a sort of rural majesty, at the eastern extremity of a smooth green lawn. To the north and to the south, from this mansion, spread the tenements of a quiet town, whose gables peep from gardens and orchard trees. Upon the roof of the stone mansion lingers the last ray of the June sun, and not a breeze is there to shake the white blossoms from the boughs, or stir into motion the smooth verdure of the lawn.

—Ere these trees are touched by winter, yes, as they are clad in the rainbows of autumn, there will be some hundreds of dead bodies stretched in horrible confusion over this lawn, in all the grotesque shapes of sudden and violent death.

For the mansion is CHEW'S HOUSE, and the village is called GERMANTOWN.

Behind these pictures of the pleasant valley of Brandywine, and the town of Germantown, I see a range of snow-clad hills, crowned with huts, and crowded with half-naked and famine-stricken men. A name is written there—it speaks of suffering that has no tongue, of anguish only to be soothed by tears of blood—for that name is VALLEY FORGE.

We will follow the thread of this singular history of the olden time, and while we learn the fate of Paul—of the Wizard's child—of Madeline—we may perchance behold some traces of the fight of Brandywine, some tokens of Germantown, and come at last to the huts and snow

of Valley Forge. We may, perchance, converse with Washington, and take by the hand the Boy-General, Gilbert La Fayette.

But neither the great facts, nor the great names of general history, shall win us from the individual narrative of the Wissahikon people. Let us translate the dark cyphers of the ancient record—let us give voice and speech to the dim Chronicle of old.

Shall we behold Paul of Ardenheim again? Even now I behold that bronzed face, shadowed by dark hair, lighted by eyes, whose strange lustre awes and wins the hearts of men. Even now I see the pure spiritual manhood of that virgin soul battling with the physical realities of life, with the base and gross temptations of the world.

Shall the spirit of the Dreamer come forth from the ordeal, without blemish or scar?

But even as we ask the question, Paul is a perjured and dishonored Man, for an overwhelming thought crowds upon our souls. The Sealed Chamber, and the secret, which drove Paul out into the world, a scorner of his father's gray hairs, with the stain of Perjury upon his soul!

A secret armed with supernatural power, darkened by mystery, as impenetrable as the blackness which rests upon the World beyond the Grave!

We may enter the old Monastery once again. We may read the name of the Deliverer concealed in the Urn. Gathering courage for our task, we may even confront that door whose dark panels are traced with the sign of the Cross. And then but a step between us and the Secret of the Sealed Chamber. Shall we look upon that fatal mystery?

Shall the Deformed, now known as Black David, now as the Invisible, ever rush before our path again, like a lurid cloud before the light of a summer day?

Winding among those quiet shades, and by those still waters of the Wissahikon, shall we chance upon a new-made grave, and find upon a rustic tombstone the name of MADELINE?

Jovial Peter Dorfner, with beard of snow and cheeks of flame, shall we ever talk with thee again, or sit beside thy broad hearth and quaff deep draughts to Christmas Eve?

Or the Wizard's child, so queenly in her bearing, so like a spirit in her starry loveliness, with her dark eyes fired by ambition and love, with the serpentine vein swelling like a prophecy upon her brow—shall we ever behold the beautiful Atheist again?

The Wizard himself, a haggard old man—old before his time, and withered by fanaticism into premature decay—shall we converse with him once more, and learn the result of his life-long meditation? Is his dream of Immortal Life upon earth only a dream? or shall he appear before us, clad in the vigor of young manhood, irresistible with the power of boundless wealth.

Then another face comes faintly to our view; the face of the aged man, who, companioned only by his children, waited in the Block-house of Wissahikon, not for the secret of immortal life on earth, or for the power of unbounded wealth, but for the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord. We have seen him reel beneath the blow of his son; we have seen that son rush forth from the Monastery, with the stamp of Fate upon his forehead. Does the old man yet survive?

Treading gently through the dim corridors of the Block-house, shall we once more meet the vision of that gentle face, with blue eyes and long, flowing, golden hair?

We may behold the Secret Brotherhood again, assembled in mysterious council, and bound to blind obedience by oaths too blasphemous for repetition. A strange Brotherhood, with Lodge rising into Lodge, Degree above Degree,—an inexplicable complication of *castes*, controlled by One Man. That solitary ruler, either Gilbert the huntsman, or the Deformed, or yet, perchance, some man altogether new to our sight.

These questions start to our lips, as we stand upon the threshold of a new Epoch in our history; these, and a thousand others, full of the same pervading interest and mystery.

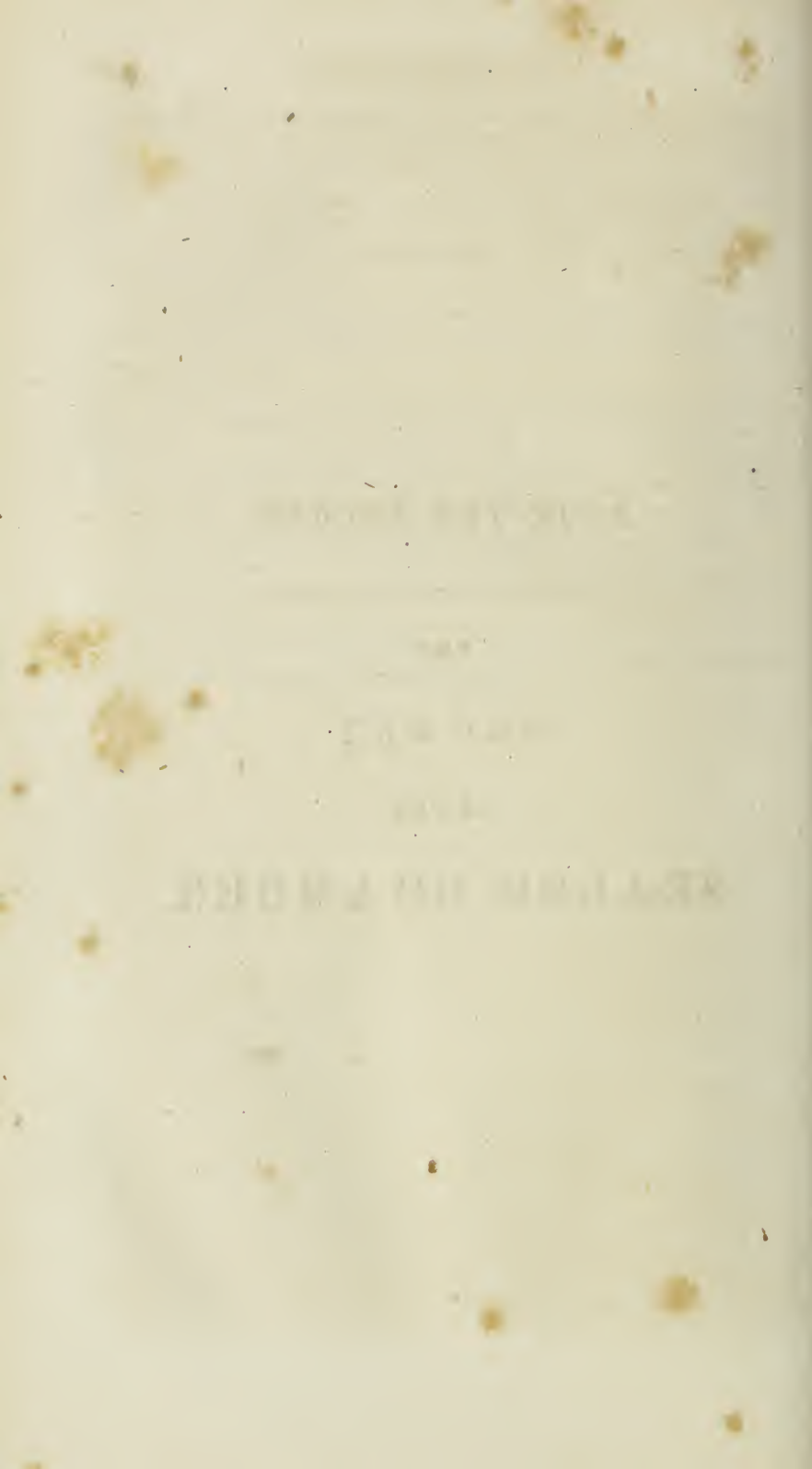
Let us translate the dusk cyphers of the ancient record—let us give voice and speech to the dim Chronicle of old.



BOOK THE SECOND.

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THE  
SECRET  
OF THE  
SEALED CHAMBER.



## CHAPTER FIRST.

## AFTER TWO YEARS.

UNDER an arbor fresh with vines, and fragrant with flowers, sat Peter Dorfner, his rotund form resting in a stout oaken chair. It was a very pleasant thing to note the contrast between his red cheeks and white beard, and the deep green of the leaves, the varied tints of the flowers. Before him was placed a table of unpainted oak, on which sundry suspicious bottles stood like the sentinels of the scene. And half-closing his eyes, with his limbs resting on a bench, old Peter resigned himself to the calm delights of rum and tobacco.

It was a pleasant arbor, standing at one end of the garden, near the farm-house, whose closed doors and windows looked black and desolate beneath the cheerful light of the summer sun.

It must be confessed, that old Peter was surrounded by all the delights that can render a man peaceful with himself and the world. Lulled by the unceasing murmur of the bees, who sung their songs among the flowers, with the fragrance of new-mown hay stealing gently over the fields, Peter Dorfner, with his red cheeks and snowy beard, his capacious form spreading lazily in the oaken chair, looked altogether like a picture of some corpulent satyr of Grecian story, clad in brown cloth, with a pipe in its mouth, and a bottle of rum near its hand. Or, in case this comparison should seem unjust, we might compare him to some Hermit of the middle ages, who disgusted with the vanity of the world, had retired to some secluded forest, and sworn a solemn oath, to devote himself forever to fatness and sleep, those cardinal duties of the monks of old.

Beyond the garden, amid whose plants and flowers the arbor rose, a green field smiled in the June sunbeams, and stretched to the south and west in gentle undulations, until it was bounded by the summer woods. Strong men, with arms bare and scythe in hand, toiled among the grass, scattering swarths of fragrant hay as they hurried along. Tired cattle were grouped in the shade, on the verge of the wood; aldermanic oxen and matronly cows, snuffing the scent of the new-mown hay, from which they were separated by that kind of rural architecture, known in grave annals as "Worm Fence." Now and then, the sound of the whetstone applied to the scythe, came merrily over the field, mingled with the lowing of cattle, and the subdued murmur of the hidden stream.



Summer was upon the scene, in all the freshness and beauty of June. There was a serene sky, only varied by passing clouds, who turned their white bosoms to the sun, and floated slowly over the woods. There was a drowsy fragrance in the very air, a fulness of intoxicating odours; and the bees among the flowers, the lowing cattle grouped in the shadows, the clang of the scythe, and the indistinct sound of the wood-hidden Wisahikon, formed the music of the scene, a very lulling music altogether, full of summer and voluptuous as June.

But the old farm-house looked sad and deserted. There were green vines trailing about its steep roof, and flinging their leaves, their flowers, from the very point of the high gable; the chesnut tree was glorious with verdure, but the doors of the farm-house, the closed shutters, gave it a lonely and desolate appearance.

Secluded in the arbor, his only companions the pipe and the bottles, Peter Dorfner took his ease, and winked sleepily at care, as though there was never a thing like trouble in the world.

Two years have passed since we beheld him last, two years full of interest and incident, and the face of Peter discloses more wrinkles about the eyes, more fatness in the cheeks, a sublimer rotundity about the form. Brown waistcoat loosened, hose ungartered, and cravat thrown aside, Peter languidly smoked his pipe, and seemed hesitating for a moment, ere he entered the domains of that ancient empire, known to philosophers and poets as the Land of Nod.

Rousing himself for a moment, he exclaimed, in a sleepy tone, "Sam I say! Where are you, you blind devil?"

In answer to this bland inquiry, a voice was heard—

"I'se here, Massa. I is," and, starting from a nook of the arbor overshadowed by foliage, the blind Negro appeared in the light, his sightless eyeballs rolling in their sockets.

"Fill my glass and fix my pipe, or—or—"

The good Peter Dorfner was fast asleep. With his head resting on one shoulder, and his gouty hands placed on his paunch, he had dropped into the land of dreams. Corpulent dreams, no doubt, blooming in fatness, with pipes between their lips, and beakers of rum-punch in their hands.

Black Sam, dressed in a suit of coarse gray homespun, stood behind his master's chair, listening with great earnestness, while his forehead became corrugated with innumerable wrinkles, his thick lips were distorted in a grin, and his eyeballs rolled unceasingly in their sockets.

"Are yo' 'sleep, Massa?" he whispered—then listened for a moment—"He am 'sleep, by gum," he added, in a tone that was scarcely audible.

Then, raising his black hands, seamed with scars and knotted in the joints, above the white hairs of the sleeping old man, Black Sam stood for a moment with his sightless eyeballs lifted toward Heaven. An

expression as sudden as it was frightful came over his face ; that visage, black as soot, contrasted with the hair, which, frosted by age, resembled white wool, was in truth most horrible to behold. Clenching his knotted fingers, the negro uttered certain words, not in broken English, but in some unknown tongue, perchance the language of his clime and race.

The good Peter Dorfner snored in his slumber ; a substantial snore, which, had it taken a form to itself, might certainly have appeared in the shape of a full-blown poppy, overcome with liquor and tired for want of sleep. In his corpulent slumber, lulled by obese dreams, with pipes in their lips and mugs of rum in their hands, the convivial Peter did not for a moment chance to think of the black visage which scowled above him, while lips distorted by rage muttered vengeance upon his head.

"Punch—don't know how to make punch?" Peter murmured in his sleep, with a chuckle that seemed choked to death, while on its way from his chest to his lips. "Some first-rate whiskey—Irish, if you can get it—a spice of lemon peel—a—a—"

Peter ended the injunction with a snore, while the negro cautiously placed one hand upon the breast of the sleeping man, and with the other brandished a common table-knife, sharpened to a point.

Again those words in the unknown tongue, accompanied by the hideous contortion; and then the Negro muttered in broken English—

"For sixteen—seventeen year, dis nigga watch his time. Sometime he tink he put pisen in yo' drink. Sometime come to yo' bed an' choke yo' in yo' dam sleep. Now he no fail!"

How lightly that brawny left hand touched the breast of the slumbering man, as if to mark the point of the intended blow, while the knife, clenched in the uplifted right hand, shone with its sharpened point over the old man's head!

Certainly the negro was a maniac ; a poor wretch, deprived of sight and reason. Else wherefore should he wish to stab the good old man who had fed him at his table, and given him to drink of his cup, for so many years ? Perchance some memory of a petty slight, received long years before, nerved the negro's arm ; it may have been that the blind man had been stolen from Africa, and cherished a mad resentment against every member of the white race.

The knife glittered faintly in the negro's grasp, as, hidden by the foliage of the arbor, he silently prepared himself for his work of murder.

"Sam kin feel yo' heart, ole boy—dere's for de white woman and de little chile—dere—"

The knife descended, urged by an arm that was nerved by madness—perchance by revenge.

"Wait a minute, my dark friend, and you may kill him at your leisure," said a bland voice.

The negro could not see, but he felt that a third person was present at

this scene; he was seized with an ague-like tremor; the knife fell from his hand. He sank on the gravel which formed the floor of the arbor, and, in a whispering tone, begged for mercy.

"By gum, dis nigga no 'tend to hurt Massa Dorfen one little hair! Dat am trut, so it am—Massa! Massa! Don't hurt ole Sam—"

"Will you be still, my dear charcoal? Will you stop your cursed hul labaloo? Or shall I just put a pistol to your head, and blow you into several pieces?"

The poor wretch, cowering on the gravel, heard the bland voice, felt the cold muzzle of the pistol pressing against his temple, and then muttered faintly—"Kill de nigga, but don't wake de old boy!"

The voice of the unknown was heard again, rising into a jovial shout—

"Dorfner, I say! Hello, man, is this the way you treat your friends—stir yourself, or I'll drink your liquor and stick the neck of an empty bottle in your yawning jaws. Dorfner, I say!"

Started by the clamor, Peter unclosed his eyes, and looked around with the peculiarly vacant glance of a corpulent gentleman aroused from a pleasant slumber.

"Good morning, friend," he slowly said—"Why, what in the d—I have we here?"

Peter removed his feet from the table, started erect in his chair, and looked in the face of the intruder with an expression of ludicrous surprise.

It was a very grave, sober-looking gentleman who stood before him, with his back to the afternoon sun, and his head and shoulders relieved by a glimpse of the blue sky, smiling beyond the distant woods. A very grave, sedate personage, indeed, dressed in black cloth from head to foot, with cravat and ruffles of inexpressible whiteness, and silver buckles about the knees and feet.

It is true that this sombre costume gave a somewhat singular boldness to the marked outline of his figure, which in the body resembled a barrel, and in the lower limbs suggested the idea of bean-poles, or something excessively lank and thin, supporting something particularly round and fat.

Beneath the black hat which the stranger wore, appeared or rather shone a very sober countenance, with eyes like minute points of glass, sparkling in a flame, cheeks red as Etna, a little nose that could hardly be called a nose, and a mouth which threatened every move to invade the ears and take possession of the back part of the head.

It was a marked face, no doubt, and, notwithstanding its demure expression, was well calculated to excite tears of—laughter.

"Peter," said the stranger, quite blandly, as, with his large right hand, half-concealed by an enormous ruffle, he described a circle in the air—"Peter, my friend, allow me to subside into a little decorous emotion on this interesting occasion. It is a long time since I have seen you, Peter



—it seems a trifling matter of some nine or ten centuries. But we grow old, my boy—we grow old—it was the remark of an ancient sage, no less renowned for the majesty of his head, than the strength of his heart,—it was *his* remark, Peter—and it shows an expansive thought, my boy,—that—that—shall I repeat the remark, my dear Peter?”

The old man passed his hands over his white beard, thrust his fingers in the corners of his eyes, twitched at his gaiters, and shook his fat frame, like a frolicsome dog, who has been indulging in a bath.

“Am I awake, or am I dreamin’? Sam! I say, Sam! come here, you scoundrel, and let me pinch you, so that I may know whether I am asleep or not. S-a-m!”

But Sam did not appear—crouching behind the oaken chair of his master, he wished to seclude himself from public view, with a modesty worthy of an ancient hermit.

“Shall I repeat the remark, Peter?” continued the stranger, bowing profoundly.

“In the first place,—” grunted Dorfner—“You’ll be so kind as to tell us who you are, and what you want, and then take yourself off, as quick as your legs will carry you. You *have* legs—eh?”

The old fellow smiled like a blustery March day, relenting all at once into the First of April. By no means discomposed, the stranger placed his hand upon his breast, lowered his head, and stood for a moment in an attitude of profound meditation.

“To think of an event and a day like this!” he exclaimed, in a tone whose shrillness reminded one of the voice of some demure spinster, who, having refused fifty-one offers of marriage, has settled down at last, into the Censor of a small neighborhood—“Here I am after a long absence, and there is Peter! I have thought of the blessed meeting—dreamed of it! I come at last; I see him—not encompassed by the cares of the world, but sitting in an arbor, with a white beard and a bottle of rum, and five strapping fellows mowin’ hay in the distance. It is thus I see him—thus—regaled by the combined fragrance of new-mown hay and black strap, and he does not know me!”

The poor fellow was lost in grief. Burying his face in his large hands, he stood opposite the astonished Peter, a picture of despair.

“Sam, S-a-m, I say! You black rascal, come here and tell me, in the name of Satan, who is this fellow?”

“He don’t know me yet,” soliloquized the stranger, rubbing the tip of his nose with the forefinger of his right hand—“Cast your eyes through the dim vistas of memory, and call to mind that touching night, when we all got drunk together—Will you, my dear?”

“Why, it is—Jacopo!” ejaculated Dorfner, with eyes like saucers.

“Jacopo? That was my name, my love. Your venerable exterior serves to remind me of it—painfully. But now, since I have taken orders, and

been commissioned by an Archbishop or two, to wear a gown, I am called the Reverend Jacob James."

"You wear a gown! you preach! Ho, ho, ho—I should like to hear you. Git up on that bench and give us a slice o' divinity, will you?"

Jacopo, or the Reverend Jacob James, as he now designates himself, took a seat on the bench near the chair of the old man, and in affecting silence proceeded to fill a glass with a great deal of rum and a very small portion of water. After which he drank the mixture with a sigh of calm delight.

"How is it with you, old boy?" He slapped Mr. Dorfner on the shoulder.

"Purty well, I thank you,—how's yourself?"

"Poorly—poo-r-ly," sighed Jacopo, filling a pipe, and striking a light from a tinder-box, which stood among the bottles—"My labors for the regeneration of my species, and so on, have struck into my pulmonaries. Don't you see how thin I am?"

The old man struggled with a fit of laughter, which seemed determined to choke him to death. The wide mouth, little nose, diminutive eyes and red cheeks of Jacopo, all subdued by an expression of exemplary sobriety, contrasted somewhat ludicrously with his rotund form and spider legs.

"Droll as ever," laughed old Peter—"You'll be the death o' me, you dog. Where have you been these two years, and—" Peter glanced stealthily around the arbor—"Where's your master—John—eh?"

"I have discharged him. He did not suit me," replied Jacopo, elaborating another glass of rum and water. "By-the-bye, how do things go with you? It's now a matter of two years and six months since we parted. What's the matter—hey? Your house shut up like a tomb? Where's the little girl—Madeline—Hello! the old man's choking to death, with a gallopin' consumption—"

The cheerful visage of the benevolent Peter grew pale and then deep purple; his eyes were fixed, and indeed his changed countenance manifested various indications of an apoplectic fit.

Jacopo revived him by a copious bath of rum and water, dashed violently in his face. It was some moments, however, before the good man revived.

"Sich a pain as I had—sich a stitch in my side—ugh! I feel quite cold. Mix me a leetle rum and light me a pipe, will you?"

Jacopo obeyed. With a tenderness that was quite filial, he prepared the draught and the pipe. The old man's white beard was presently obscured by a veil of tobacco smoke.

"You asked after Madeline," he said, quite calmly, with his eyes twinkling from the half-closed lids—"We never heard of her since that night. There was blood upon the floor, but that was all."

"And the hunter—Tom, I think they called him?"

"Gilbert,—Gilbert—never heard o' him nayther," mumbled Peter, without removing the pipe from his lips.

"You don't say! A girl and a boy disappear on one night—it looks as if they went off together—"

"Or as if he took her off and then made tracks himself—" suggested Dorfner, with a singular twinkle in his half-shut eyes.

"How's matters about here just now, anyhow? Eh? King or Country? Which way do you drink?"

"That is a ticklish question. There's a great deal to be said on both sides, but I s'pose you won't object to fill a glass to His Majesty, God bless him!"

The good old man lifted his hand as if to raise his hat from his head, but finding nothing like a hat, he apologized by raising the glass to his lips.

"King, God bless him," cried Jacopo, "or, Continental Congress—I don't care a tuppence which."

"Hey? what kind of man are you, anyhow? A—"

—"Man just like yourself, fond of peace and plenty, quietness and tobacco, sound principles and Jamaica rum. Tut—tut, Peter. Why should you and I quarrel about these trifling things? What difference does it make to us, whether we have a King George or a King Washington?"

Jacopo winked rather familiarly at the old man, and placing his spindle-shanks upon the table, leaned against the frame-work of the arbor, while each corner of his extensive mouth emitted a cloud of bluish smoke. Dorfner regarded him with half-shut eyes, and yet with a look of searching scrutiny. Two years had not indeed given more wrinkles to the bluff countenance of the old man, or stolen a solitary tint from his blooming cheeks, but his intellect seemed impaired, his memory confused and dim. Even as he gazed sidelong into the complacent visage of Jacopo, he murmured—"Queer fellow—queer! Where have I seen him? Odd—droll—queer!"

"That was quite a touching incident," exclaimed Jacopo, after a long pause—"It melted me. I was all brandy and tears."

"What are you drivin' at?" cried Peter, still eyeing his eccentric companion.

"It was so very affecting. It worked upon me like peppered brandy. It seemed to touch you a little—just a little—"

Jacopo uttered these words without the slightest change in the grotesque complacency of his face; his feet were on the table, the pipe between his lips, and the glass of rum in his hand.

Peter opened his eyes. He regarded his friend with a wild stare.

"You were saying something, but whether my head is thick, or



whether you are drunk, I cannot tell. Speak out, will you—and if it's all the same to you, speak it in English—”

“ Why, Peter,” said Jacopo, eyeing with calm satisfaction a puff of smoke which floated slowly upward toward the fragrant ceiling of the arbor—“ I was just thinking of the poor girl—Amelia Caroline, I think you call her ?”

“ Madeline,” said the old man rather sharply.

“ Madeline: that's it. (Do you observe that cloud of smoke? how much it looks like his blessed Majesty—there's his nose)—Madeline. That's the name. What a scene when she woke from her faintin' fit on *that* night! I never could get her words out of my mind—could you, Peter ?”

“ What words !”

The old man laid his pipe on the table, and rested his cheeks between his hands, his eyes growing brighter and larger as he gazed steadily into the face of the immovable Jacopo.

“ Just watch that puff, will you? Did ever you see sich a capital Turk's head—the nose is perfect!—Oh, as to the girl's words, I can't of course remember them, but you know, that she said something about her mother being put out of the way, some eighteen years before——”

“ The d——l she did !” Peter's lips parted, disclosing his white teeth set firmly together.

“ Can't you call to mind? Peter, you are dull. How her mother was brought to the farm-house of Wissahikon; and 'while in the pains of a mother's anguish—' You remember, Peter ?”

Jacopo did not cast his gaze toward the face of the old man; indeed he seemed to avoid his glance. But, had he looked into that face, he would have encountered an expression of ferocity, such as is not oftentimes coupled with venerable hair and white beard.

The old man did not speak a word in reply, but sank back into his chair and closed his eyes.

After a moment, Jacopo ventured to turn his gaze—ventured, we say, for he seemed conscious that he was provoking the rage of a man who was neither to be trusted nor despised.

“ There he sits, like a venerable Pope, fast asleep among seventeen Cardinals. It is a glorious picture! O for the pencil of a Vandyke, a Godfrey Kneller, or a Michael Angelo, to sketch that nose, and make that beard eternal in white paint and canvass! What a dear old man he is, after all—such traits of virtue amid his fatness, such streaks of worth amid his ripeness !”

With ejaculations such as these, Jacopo watched the slumbering man, murmuring now and then in an undertone—“ What a perfect old devil—shouldn't wonder if he had a hoof and two claws.”

“ The dear old 'possum !” he resumed in a loud voice—“ He thinks he'll make believe to be fast asleep, so that I can drink his liquor at my

leisure, without shocking the delicate modesty of my nature. Good man! But no—he is asleep—ah, that snore—a snore that seems to sit in his nose like a monk in a cloister, and sings hoarse anthems in praise of fatness—Peter, I say! Wake up and drink, will you?”

The corpulent Peter unclosed his eyes.

“You there yet?” he said, in a gruff tone.

“Did you think I’d leave you? Why, I mean to stay all night with you, and we’ll have a good time together, and then to-morrow you may *over-persuade* me to stay for a few days more. I am of an obliging disposition. When I was in Italy, the Pope remarked in the most delicate manner, ‘My dear Jack,’ says he—we were taking a few bottles together in a private chamber in the Vatican—‘My dear Jack—’ says he—for he called me Jack for short—”

The remark uttered by the Pope to his friend Jack, while taking a few bottles of wine together, was no doubt very beautiful, but it is lost in hopeless oblivion. For as Jacopo, calmly puffing his pipe, was about to repeat the said remark, for the gratification of his friend Peter, the good old man, with an abrupt exclamation, bearing some resemblance to an oath, broke his pipe, and wished Jacopo and the Pope to the—end of the world. He did not say ‘end of the world,’ it is true, for he named a dark personage who commits all the sin in the universe, leaving poor mortality scathless and innocent.

“I want to know what you mean by makin’ fun o’ me?” continued Peter—“Tellin’ me these cock-and-bull stories, and fillin’ yourself with the idea that I’m a-goin’ to invite you to take up your abode in my house. Why—Mister What’s-your-name, *I don’t know you.*”

This was to the point. Had you seen the old man’s face flushing with anger from his white beard to the roots of his hair, while his clenched hand descended heavily upon the table, you would have realized the full force of his words.

Jacopo smoked away, looking neither to the right nor left, nor down his nose, but straight forward, his whole attention riveted by the fragrant clouds which floated around the bowl of his pipe.

“Do you hear?” thundered the old man, “I say your room is better than your company. Tramp!”

“Peter,” said Jacopo very mildly, without turning his head—“Your insinuations are indelicate. A stranger listening to us, and ignorant of our sworn friendship, might draw unfavorable inferences from your sly hints.”

The good Peter Dorfner could not believe his eyes or trust his ears. To be bearded at his own table, and in his own arbor, over his own liquor, by a man whose body resembled a barrel supported by broomsticks!

There were strange rumors among the country folks in regard to Peter

He was either a basely slandered, or much mistaken man. His temper was ferocious; the source of his wealth mysterious; few of the neighbors came any longer to his farm-house, and even the men who worked for him, regarded the good old man with an indefinable fear. Had he not turned law, divinity and physic into ridicule, by beguiling Lawyer Simmons, Doctor Perkenpine and a grave Parson into a supper of barbecued—cats? Every farm-house of the Wissahikon was full of the Legend, and even the firesides of Germantown grew pale at the idea. Mingled with this grave matter, there was a trifling suspicion of Murder hanging around the history of the benevolent man.

Peter was somewhat proud of his reputation; even as some distinguished literary gentleman of the modern day, is delighted at being compared to a certain animal,—called pork! when it is dead—so the good old man grew merry at the epithets—“Beast and Bear!”

You may therefore imagine the amazement, the indignation struggling into life on Peter’s face, when he beheld himself defied and insulted by the sublime impertinence of Jacopo.

“Sly hints, indeed!” he exclaimed, panting for breath as his visage grew purple with rage. “Shall I kick you all over my farm?”

Jacopo smoked in silence, glancing meanwhile at a piece of printed paper which he had taken from his pocket. It looked like the fragment of an old newspaper, and was somewhat triangular in form. A singular grimace agitated Jacopo’s face as he perused the irregular sentences and broken words, which appeared upon this dingy relic :

was  
 cealed in a closet,  
 looks out upon a large  
 rfner, with the Corpse, also  
 rchments and papers, which  
 lead to some knowledge of the  
 the poor victim. This all occu  
 Twenty-third of November, 1756; and in ma  
 this confession, I ask forgiveness of mankind for  
 share in this detestable Crime, and Pray the L

Such was the fragment, on which Jacopo gazed with great satisfaction, his eyes twinkling with an expression of quiet malice, while his enormous mouth displayed its full magnitude in a hideous grin.

“Now that looks very much like nonsense, and it’s but a dirty piece of an old newspaper after all,” Jacopo murmured, without removing the pipe from his mouth, “and yet there may exist, somewhere in the world, another piece of paper,—newspaper too—which, attached to this, would make it read quite sensibly. By-the-bye, friend Peter, did you ever hear of a Philadelphia merchant named Hopkins?”



The last words addressed to Dorfner only elicited an oath, coupled with the words—

“The scoundrel! He was here some time, years ago, prying into my affairs, and wanting to know what had become of Madeline. The dog! Will you travel, sirrah?”

Jacopo rose from his seat, and carefully placed his pipe upon the table. Then looking into Peter’s face, which, purpled by rage, glared in a ray of sunshine, Jacopo placed his hand within the breast of his waistcoat.

“Do you see this little bit o’ convenience? A pistol, nothing but a pistol, mounted in silver and loaded with ball. I am a great coward, Peter—you can see me tremble, if you look sharp. So I carry this trifle, and another trifle like it, for I am told that you are afflicted with *mad dogs* on the Wissahikon.

Jacopo spoke the truth. He was a coward—a pitiable coward, afraid of the report of a pistol, frightened at the smell of burnt powder. Yet, on the present occasion, nerved by an inexplicable influence into something like courage, he dared to confront the irritable old man, and defy him on his own ground.

“Sam, I say,—where’s that nigger? Sam, go into the farm-house and bring me my pistols.”

There was a deadly light in the old man’s gray eye—his lips were violently agitated. But the blind negro did not appear, and Dorfner, purple with rage, and unable, from a delicate twinge of gout, to move with his accustomed vigor, was left exposed to the round face, wide mouth and impertinent eyes of the intruder.

“Your impertinence is only a cloak, by \* \* \*!” thundered the old man—“You have some deeper motive——”

As if conscious that he had said too much, old Peter suddenly halted, took up his pipe and began to smoke again. The hand which held the pipe trembled like a leaf.

Jacopo resumed his seat. Amid all his bravado, there was delicately perceptible an inexhaustible endowment of cowardice. Once or twice he shuddered as his eye rested upon the inflamed visage of Dorfner, but, disguising all marked indications of emotion, he silently examined his pistols.

“Ha, ha——” a hearty laugh almost frightened Jacopo from his seat—“Ha, ha, my boy, did you think to make the old boy mad with you? Capitably done, by \* \* \*! But you did not succeed, ha, ha, ha! You shall stay all the night with me, and we’ll have a good time o’t together. You and me only, my good fellow, for I don’t care about the company of the neighbors. I’ll brew you a punch, an old-fashioned punch, and you will sing and fiddle, and we’ll go reeling to our beds—ho, ho, my boy! you don’t know old Peter yet!”

Had the table taken wings and flown through the top of the arbor,

Jacopo could not have been half so much confounded as he was now, by the sudden hilarity, the extemporaneous good-fellowship of the old man.

"We will, old boy, we will!" he shrilly shouted, as soon as he could command the power of speech—"A night of it together—that's the word! I'll drink to your white beard, and you will drink to my legs, and—" he added in a tone inaudible to Peter—"I'll take good care that you don't put medicine in my liquor, or steel to my throat."

"Where have you been all this time;—these two years and six months?" kindly inquired Dorfner.

"Engaged on business of state," responded Jacopo—"Settling a little difficulty between my friend the Pope and the Emperor of Germany. But let me ask a question in return—how have you been all this while? Any news stirring about the region? The old Wizard alive yet?"

"Gone these two years. His house is shut up—nobody at home. Supposed by some—ha, ha—that he is gone to his Master—ho, ho!"

It was a lame jest, and yet the fat old fellow laughed heartily, until his broad paunch and white beard shook in sympathy.

"Then there was a queer body, whom you all feared—how's this they called him? Paul—Paul—Birmingham—was that the name?"

"Paul Ardenheim," said the old man, with a sudden and marked change of voice—"He has never been seen on the Wissahikon, since the last night of Seventy-four."

"Had he no family? Was not there an old house, castle or monastery, somewhere up here, among the woods? The young man had a father; a sister: do tell us all about him!"

"We never mention *those people*," said Dorfner, glancing over his shoulder with an uneasy gesture—"I don't believe much in devils, but it's not safe to trifle with such matters. Nobody about Wissahikon speaks of *him*—that is, you know, *Paul*—or of his people—"

"But the monastery, or castle, or what in the deuce do you call it?"

"I'll not call it any thing just now. Talk about something else."

"You don't believe in devils? My dear old boy, don't you know that it's impossible to doubt the existence of a Devil? You may not believe in a God, but as to a Devil—human nature could not get along without one. I believe in Devils. Pity the poor devil who don't."

As he said this, Jacopo drew once more from his pocket the fragment of printed paper, which we have given to the reader, and glanced over it with a peculiar grimace, muttering with a chuckle—"Hopkins is a merchant, but he is sharp, dev'lish sharp! Twenty-third of November, fifty-six—those kind o' dates are like Devils. I believe in 'em."

"What's that?" cried Dorfner—"Where did you get that slip of paper? It is mine—I'll swear it!"

He started from his chair, reached over the table, and attempted to grasp the fragment. His features were agitated by a mingled expression,

which Jacopo could not altogether comprehend. It was not fear, it was not rage, but seemed like fear and anger, struggling with a darker emotion.

"I was going to light my pipe with it," said Jacopo, very quietly—"I picked it up near the garden-gate. Take it, my old boy. By-the-bye, what does that 'Twenty-Third of November, 'fifty-six,' mean? Day of your birth, I suppose; and yet you look older than twenty-one."

Peter took the paper, and pressed it against the table with his thumb, at the same time drawing from a pocket another fragment, which fitted it with great nicety, thus producing the appearance of one piece of paper, square in form, and filled with the same printed characters.

Jacopo would have given the richest tint on his infinitesimal nose for the privilege of perusing this second fragment, which was evidently a part of the first. He beheld Dorfner gazing upon it, with his eyes downcast, and his head bent upon his broad chest—he saw the fingers of the old man shake with an irrepressible tremor. Rising from his seat, he glided with a noiseless footstep to the side of his aged companion, and looked stealthily over his shoulder.

His small eyes dilated as he beheld the printed characters, and he could not repress an ejaculation which his surprise forced to his lips.

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## CHAPTER SECOND.

### THE FACE AND THE SHADOW.

"HAH! The two pieces form one paragraph—it reads quite sensibly, I vow!"

But the next moment he sank back, affrighted and trembling. The old man, startled by his ejaculations, had raised his head; his face was turned over his shoulder, and his eyes rested upon the visage of Jacopo. The veins stood boldly out upon that forehead; the cheeks, at other times flushed by the tints of good liquor, were now pale—almost livid. There was mischief in the expression of the old man's lips, and a quiet ferocity in his gaze.

"Who told you to look over my shoulder?"

The good Peter did not swear; his tone was very even and subdued, and therefore Jacopo felt that there was danger in his eye. Confused,



afraid, without the power to frame an answer, he stood trembling before the gaze of Peter Dorfner.

Jacopo was a coward, and now he knew that his life hung on a chance as frail as the tie that binds the withered leaf to the bough. He changed color, his knees shook together; he clasped his hands. Should he fall on his knees and beg for mercy?

"Did you *read*—scoundrel?" was the question asked by Dorfner, in a voice unnaturally low and calm.

There was something pitiable in the contrast—here, Dorfner, a man of muscular frame, with his face—stamped with a sullen ferocity—his face turned over his shoulder, thus presenting his forehead, nose and beard, in profile to the light—there Jacopo, with his face distorted into an expression of grotesque fear, while his slender limbs trembled under the weight of his rotund body.

In his terror he had forgotten his pistols. It may have been that his abject fear was caused as much by the words which he had hastily perused, as by the determined ferocity of Dorfner's visage.

"Did you *read*, I say?"

Was it courage born of the consciousness of a fatal Truth, or the frenzied energy of despair? Jacopo became suddenly calm; his limbs trembled no longer; something like dignity was impressed upon his face.

Gazing over Peter's shoulder, he beheld a face, through an interval of the foliage—a face which seemed not the visage of a living thing—but an Apparition from the Other World. At the sight of that face, whose eyes were fixed upon him, a strange energy filled the soul of the coward; calmly, his voice unbroken by a tremor, he uttered these words—

"I did read. And more than this, I only read what I knew before. That you, Peter Dorfner, did, on the night of November 'Twenty-third, fifty-six, in the room near yonder chesnut tree, commit a barbarous and cowardly murder!"

As he uttered these words, he folded his arms, and stood prepared to meet his death. The eyes were gazing upon him all the while. Through the interval in the foliage he saw the face, and felt his coward soul filled with a new life.

Peter Dorfner rose from his seat, his face livid with rage. He had no weapon, but a desperate strength, the fury of a madman, fired his veins. His chest swelling, the veins on his face standing black and protuberant from the livid skin, he advanced a single step, while his glance announced his deadly purpose.

Jacopo did not move; pale and motionless, he did not wish to avoid the fury of the old man.

For a moment, Dorfner, roused into all the vigor of his early manhood contemplated his victim.

"I will throttle you—I will crush you with one grasp—" said Peter, in a tone whose measured emphasis indicated the relentless nature of his vengeance, better than all the oaths, or boisterous language, that ever rose to the lips of madness.

At this moment a shadow passed between Dorfner and the sun. As the shadow passed, a footstep was heard.

He turned his face to the west, and sank back in his chair, like a man who had received a bullet in his heart. His face expressed surprise—dis-may—his extended hand pointed toward the west.

Surprised beyond the power of language, Jacopo turned and gazed in the direction indicated by the extended hand.

The garden walk, extending from the arbor to the western wicket, stretched before him, a brown path leading among beds of foliage and flowers.

There was a form in the path; the form of a young man dressed in dark attire, with a black mantle floating from his shoulder. His face could not be seen, but as he went down the path with measured steps, his form thrown into distinct relief by the western sky, the sunbeams tinted his dark attire, and fringed with a pale golden lustre the locks of his black hair.

It was a muscular form, tempered by the grace and beauty of young manhood; the step was firm and regular; though only the back of the unknown was visible, it was evident that he was attired in a costume, altogether different from the fashion of the day—a dark dress, which fitted closely to his limbs, was only relieved by the graceful drapery of the mantle, that floated from his shoulder. His locks were surmounted by a cap, whose solitary plume rose in the sunlight, blackly defined against the western sky.

It was this form which, passing before the arbor, had thrown a shadow upon Peter's face, as his arm was nerved for a deadly blow; and now, as the unknown, without once looking back, went toward the western gate, the old man, stricken into his chair, as by a bullet, extended his hand, while his features were blank with amazement and terror.

Jacopo could only gaze from the face of Peter to the retreating form; the scene deprived him of the power of speech.

"It's *him*—I'd swear it!" gasped the old man, without moving his arm, or changing his gaze. "I can't see his face, but I know it's *him*. Not in flesh and blood—a rale livin' man, but his sperrit—"

"Who?" exclaimed Jacopo, as the memory of the unknown face, whose eyes had nerved him for a desperate accusal, only a moment since, came back to him with overwhelming force.

"Who? Don't ask me—" cried the old man, his features still violently agitated, while his forehead was bathed in perspiration—"You know who—we've all seen him afore, but since that night he has not been seen *alive*

on Wissahikon. It's a sperrit—I tell you—if he'd only look back—it's him, I say; I'll swear to 't!"

With these incoherent words, old Peter still pointed towards the unknown, his emotion growing more like madness every moment.

"It's a living man," cried Jacopo—"It is—"

"Don't speak that name," the old man exclaimed with a shudder—"I tell you he's no livin' man. He has not been seen on the Wissahikon since the night when Madeline disappeared—'There was a mangled body found, some days afterwards—it was him! No! 'no! No livin' man, by \* \* \*! A sperrit—a sperrit!"

To Jacopo the violent emotion of Peter Dorfner was altogether incomprehensible. Peter, who had grown gray under suspicion of various crimes, who was said to fear "neither God nor Devil;" Peter Dorfner, who, only a moment since, stood prepared for a work of murder, now a pitiable and abject thing; stricken as by a supernatural hand—it was all a mystery to the eyes of Jacopo.

True, he had himself beheld a face, brilliant with eyes of unutterable power, looking upon him, through an interval of the foliage. A vague memory came over him of having seen that face before; and a name rose to his lips, and, as we have seen, was drowned by the ejaculation of Dorfner.

"Look! He passes through the gate, but don't once look back! It's a sperrit, I say! He goes down the hill-side into the meadow—hah! 'The men workin' in the fields drop their scythes and look at him. Does a livin' man start up from the ground, walk between you and the sun, and steal away without once lookin' back? Look yonder! He is passin' through the midst of them—he turns—no! Without lookin' back, he hurries toward the woods—Ah, it's him, not in body, but in sperrit—it is Paul Ardenheim!"

And this man, who believed in "neither God nor Devil," was conquered by the most improbable superstition. That superstition may have been the last ember of a great religious principle, burning faintly amid the ashes of a debased nature. With the word "Paul Ardenheim," he fell back insensible in the chair, his parting lips spotted with white foam.

Jacopo advanced to the table, eager to grasp the fragments of printed paper, and read at his leisure the Revelation which was embodied in their words. Only one fragment met his view; the other had disappeared.

"I can't make head nor tail on't," he exclaimed, with an oath. "And yet Hopkins must have some hint of the matter, or he would not have directed me to search the room near the chesnut tree. 'Sleep in that room, Jacopo, and search every closet. Whatever you discover in the way of paper or parchment, bring to me, and your fortune is made.' But how did old Peter obtain this paragraph of a newspaper?—He must know that he is suspected o' doin' somethin' not altogether pretty."



While the light playing among the leaves and flowers of the arbor, shone over the pallid face and snowy beard of the insensible man, Jacopo anxiously perused the fragment.

|                                    |             |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| After the deed was done, the child | taken away. |
| The body was con                   | near the    |
| window which                       | chesnut     |
| tree. Do                           | concealed   |
| certain pa                         | I suppose   |
| may                                | real name   |
| of                                 | rred on the |
|                                    | king        |
|                                    | my          |
|                                    | ord         |

Jacopo examined the paper with a look of ludicrous dismay.

"If I had the other fragment, I might make something out o' this. '*After the deed was done, the child was taken away.*' There was a *child*, then? '*The body was con*'—there was a '*body*' also—Zounds! Where is that fragment? Why could not Hopkins have told me all about the matter, instead of sending me in the dark on such a fool's errand. Here I've stood the chance of having my throat cut twice, and even now am not certain that my lungs will not be perforated by some dirty piece of lead or other—ah, that fragment, that oracular fragment!"

As Jacopo thus gave vent to his feelings in a crude soliloquy, he did not cease to examine alternately, and with a searching glance, the piece of paper which he held in one hand, and the white-bearded face, which glowed in the sunlight at his side.

"The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that he knows something of Madeline. And Madeline is no common peasant girl—a stray slice cut off from the fruit-cake of aristocracy! Why should Hopkins take such an interest in the matter? Let me think! Two years and six months ago, Hopkins and my *late* master were thick as thieves. There was some talk about a mysterious affair; in fact, the merchant and the lord were never done muttering, whispering, and counselling with each other.—Oh, my unpropitious stars, why did I thus incur your vengeance?"

As though some terrible memory had crossed his brain, Jacopo clasped his hands piteously, and cast his eyes toward the top of the arbor.

"Why did I thus depart from the strict line of my duty, and betray a sinful weakness? Yes, on the day when my lord left Philadelphia, he sent me to Hopkins's house, to his own chamber, in fact, to get certain important papers. I had them in my hand, and yet forgot to break the seal! Pitiably frailty! Had I even moistened the seal with warm water,

there would be some excuse for me, but as it is, I did not even make an effort. That seal once removed, the whole secret of the matter would have been revealed—but as the case stands, I know dev'lish little about it, and have no security for my throat or lungs!"

His eye rested upon the insensible man. The right hand was clenched upon the breast; there was a fragment of paper between the finger and thumb. Jacopo gave utterance to a cry of joy.

"Could I only get it—but he may recover—hah! He begins to breathe again! Oh, for a stray apoplexy to touch old Peter on the neck, or even a vagrant catalepsy to throw him into a trance!"

Advancing stealthily, he touched the hand of the insensible man, but Peter did not move.

"I know you—you old dog! Makin' believe that you don't see or hear; and in a minute you'll spring upon me like a she wild-cat!"

He touched the fragment; gently, very gently, but the old man's hand was like a vice. Trembling from head to foot, Jacopo seized the hand, and pressed the thumb and forefinger apart. The old man stirred, but did not uncloset his eyes. The paper fluttered to the ground, near Jacopo's feet.

In a moment he had seized it; he had placed it within the other fragment; and here is the result, which he beheld:

After the deed was done, the child was taken away. The body was concealed in a closet, near the window which looks out upon a large chesnut tree. Dorfner, with the Corpse, also concealed certain parchments and papers, which I suppose may lead to some knowledge of the real name of the poor victim. This all occurred on the Twenty-third of November, 1756; and in making this confession, I ask forgiveness of mankind for my share in this detestable crime, and Pray the Lord

Jacopo shook like a withered leaf. If there was one word which he feared above another, it was the monosyllable 'CORPSE.'

"I have no objection to 'body,' used in a funeral sense, but—'Corpse!' Augh! So unpleasantly suggestive! 'Dorfner'—oh, ho, my dear old boy! No wonder you start and swear, and go off in faintin' spells—no wonder. 'Poor victim'—'child'—my brains goes whirling like a cork in an eddy!"

A black face rose slowly over the chair of the insensible Peter. Jacopo shuddered as he saw the sightless eyeballs glowing redly in the sockets, while the sun streamed over the dark visage. A knife gleamed over the grey hairs of Dorfner; it was clenched in the right arm of the negro.

Jacopo left the arbor on tip-toe, passed around it, and strode with a noiseless step toward the farm-house. He passed under the shadows of the chesnut tree, and cast an anxious glance toward the window. Up that fatal tree, you will remember, Gilbert climbed on the last night of 1775. Jacopo stood on the threshold stone—the farm-house door was open.

He cast a searching glance around. All was still and desolate about the farm-house. The sun shone gayly over the roof of the barn, and there was a solitary bird chirping among the foliage of the chesnut tree. To the west stretched the undulating field, with the laborers grouped among the piles of new-mown hay. But they labored no longer; their scythes rested upon the grass; every face was turned toward the western woods.

Even as he stood upon the threshold stone, one foot resting upon the sill of the door—while his hand still grasped the torn fragments of printed paper—Jacopo turned his gaze far to the west, and gazed in the direction indicated by the extended arms of the laborers.

A dark form was seen on the verge of the distant woods,—dimly seen, for the shadows gathered thickly beneath the luxuriant foliage.

It was the form which, not long ago, had passed between the old man and the sun, and with its shadow stricken him down in the very act of murder.

“Paul Ardenheim,” cried Jacopo, as he crossed the threshold—“Or his Ghost.” He closed the door and was lost to sight.

At the same moment, the dark figure disappeared among the shadows of the distant woods, and a deep groan resounded from the arbor

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## CHAPTER THIRD.

### THE DOVE.

THE dark form which come between the old man and the sun, and with its shadow struck him down, even in the act of Murder; was it indeed Paul Ardenheim, or but an apparition gliding sadly and noiselessly through the light and shadow of the summer day?

In the woods which bloom so fragrantly around the Wissahikon, we may find an answer to our question.

There was a narrow path leading from the field of new-mown hay,



down into the nooks of the forest, down even to the waters of the Wissahikon. Where the oaks and chesnuts, the maples and the pines, were grouped in one rich contrast of foliage: where the sunlight came lovingly, scattering patches of gold upon the sod; where a tiny thread of liquid silver trickled down a gray old rock, and made low music among the shadows—such was the course of the wild-wood path, which led from the field of new-mown hay, to the verge of the Wissahikon waters.

Along this path, the dark form hastened with a measured step, never once looking to the right or left, or casting a backward glance through the light and shadow of the woods.

Now in the sunshine, where every outline of the shape, every lock of the waving hair, and point of the dark attire, was fully disclosed, and now into the shade, where the thick leaves spread a tremulous canopy, and the low voice of the tiny rill sung through the silence.

Now turning the breast of this gray rock, crowned by a clump of saplings, now along this level slope, where the moss, softer than any carpet, glowed in a passing ray, and now along this barren strip of earth, whose brown leaves are darkened by the twilight of the withered pines.

Thus, without once looking back, or glancing to the right or left, the dark form wandered on.

At last there came a narrow dell, open to the sunlight, and full of fresh wild grass, whose vivid green was sprinkled with flowers. A narrow dell, with walls of leaves on either side,—or rather with the foliage spreading from the grass to the sky, like immense folds of tapestry, rendered surpassingly beautiful by fairy hands. A narrow dell, through whose wild grass the tiny thread of silver sparkled fitfully, and through whose silence the low song was ever singing.

At the western extremity of this dell, where it widened into a slope of carpet-like moss, sparkled a calm sheet of water, embosomed among leaves. The shadow which rested there, making the water more calmly beautiful, and wrapping the giant trees on the opposite shore in vague twilight, was only broken by a flood of hazy light, which came rushing like a golden rain through an opening in the trees.

Above the dell,—above the calm sheet of water, undimpled by a ripple—shone a glimpse of Heaven, whose deep azure was blushing into gold, at the kiss of the afternoon sun.

And the dark form which had passed between the old man and the sun, striking him down with its shadow, hastened along the dell, without once looking back.

As it came in sight of the calm sheet of water, a word arose upon the silence, uttered by a voice of sad emphasis.

That word was “Wissahikon!”

At last the form drew near the water-side, and that calm sheet, spreading without a ripple, in its frame of rocks and trees, reflected a face.

It was a bronzed face, shadowed by locks of dark brown hair. There were large lustrous eyes beneath the boldly marked brows. There was beard upon the firm lip—dark beard, which clothed the round chin, and softly relieved the dark olive complexion. There was a broad forehead, shadowed by a gloom beyond all power of language to describe. Altogether, a face so bold, and yet beautiful in its young manhood, so darkened in every lineament by some memory of the past, or prophecy of the future, the Wissahikon waters never reflected before this hour.

The dark form stood by the water-side—centred in that scene so full of romance and beauty. To the north and south spread the calm water, resembling no impetuous torrent, but a slumbering lakelet embosomed amid trees, rocks and flowers.

There were grotesque rocks on the opposite shore, mingled with the colossal trunks of forest trees. Beyond those rocks, and through the intervals of those trees, the ascent of a broad hill-side was dimly seen, with a ray of light trembling through the distant shadows.

This shore was in strong contrast with that on which the dark form stood. Leaves, blossoms, flowers, nothing but leaves, blossoms and flowers, from the calm water to the glimpse of sky. No grand trunks of giant trees were visible; it was a mass of foliage bathed in sunshine, while the opposite shore brooded among its shadows.

The opening of the dell—a space of level moss—alone broke the uniformity of the leafy prospect.

To the south and the north, the foliage, meeting from the opposite shores, enclosed the waters in its embrace, and the calm waves mirrored every tree, rock and flower, until there seemed another wood, another world and sky beneath their surface.

Over the tree-tops of the south, a glimpse of a roof was seen, with a line of smoke fading away from a chimney into the leaves and sky. It was the roof of an ancient mill, standing near a waterfall, whose music came in softened cadence over the woods.

As the dark form stood on the edge of the bank, as the bronzed face was reflected in the waters, a sharp sound crashed on the silence of the scene. It was the report of gun or pistol, or perchance only the echo of a rock thundering from some distant height, but the sound passed unheeded.

That face still gazed in sadness into the clear waves.

Presently a sound as of fluttering wings was heard, and an object fell at the feet of the motionless form.

It was a dying bird, with a drop of blood starting from the soft plumage of its breast. There was a glassy film upon its eye—once it moved its wings, beating the grass with faint blows—and then it was dead.

There was something like an omen, or a warning in this scene—it lay upon the green moss, its white plumage tinted by gold, with a single blood-drop starting from the breast.

And the form standing near the waters bent down, and a hand raised the bird—it was a wild dove—and as the warmth of life still clung about its plumage, it was pressed against a manly breast.

“A welcome home!” a sad voice was heard—“Is it an omen, or a warning?”

At the same moment a glad laugh rang merrily in the air, as, from the crashing bushes, sprang a manly form, while a handsome face, ruddy with excitement, appeared amid its encircling locks of chesnut hair.

“Paul Ardenheim!” rang out the tones of that cheerful voice—“You here!”

“Reginald!” exclaimed a deep voice, in an accent of unfeigned amazement.

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## CHAPTER FOURTH.

### PAUL—REGINALD.

WITH his gun resting on his shoulder, and his small huntsman’s cap tossed aside from his forehead, the new-comer advanced, and in a moment stood beside the sombre form.

His muscular form was attired in a blue hunting-shirt, gathered to his waist by a belt, and reaching from the bared throat to the knees. He wore boots of buckskin. There was a powder-horn at his side, and a hunting-knife glimmered below his girdle.

His cheeks flushed by excitement, his dark blue eyes flashing with the consciousness of youth and health, his proud lip darkened by a slight mustache, he stood beside that sombre form, like an embodiment of animal beauty, beside the incarnation of a Thought.

It was a strong contrast, between this face glowing with ruddy hues, and relieved by luxuriant hair, and that bronzed visage, whose large earnest eyes and pale forehead—thrown more distinctly into view by the sombre attire—only suggested the idea of acute mental suffering.

They clasped hands together, and stood in silence, gazing into each other’s eyes,—Paul Ardenheim and Reginald of Lyndulfe.

“It seems to me, as though centuries had gone since last we met!” said Paul, keeping the hand of his friend within his own, and resting upon that glowing face his sad lustrous eyes.

“Egad, Paul, it does indeed!” cried Reginald, with a cheerful laugh—“Deuce take the cap, I say,” and he rested his rifle against a rock, and



tossed his cap on the sod—"The day is somewhat warm—a little too warm for violent exercise—sit there, Paul, and I'll sit here, and we'll talk over old times together."

"Old times," echoed Paul, as he rested himself upon a rock, which overhung the water—"We have known each other something more than two years."

A sad smile passed over his face.

"Two years and six months, my dear Paul—" Reginald threaded his chesnut curls with a delicate hand sparkling with rings—"And yet we have *lived* more, Paul, in that brief period, than in all the rest of our years together. Lived, I say,—suffered, enjoyed—started up from boys into men. Two years and six months ago, Paul, we met for the first time, under peculiar circumstances. It was in the old farmer's house, at the wedding of a young girl—you remember?"

Was it only the shadow of a passing cloud, or did the cool air of this quiet dell chill his blood, fevered as it was by violent exercise?

As he uttered the words, 'a young girl,' a cloud came over his face, an icy tremor agitated his limbs.

"You saved my life, Paul. That bound me to you for ever; in life or in death. The next morning, at daybreak, Paul, as I was about to leave Philadelphia—having been called home to England by a letter—you appeared suddenly before me, pronounced my name, and thus reminded me of the pledge which I had made to you the night before. You announced your intention of going to England. We clasped hands on it, Paul, and went together. Do you remember our journey to Lyndulfe? Those were delightful days we passed together, Paul, in the old castle, among the Yorkshire hills—but, Paul—"

"Spare your reproaches, Reginald. I left you suddenly, and without one farewell word. The hours that we spent together in Lyndulfe castle are present with me now—I remember well, how well! our solemn pledge of brotherhood. But one night I hurried from the castle; I did not clasp your hand before I went; I did not tell you of the cause of my flight."

"Flight?"

"Yes, it was a flight. I fled, Reginald—over England, over France, Italy—over Europe, and never once escaped from my relentless pursuer."

"Relentless pursuer?"

"It was not a physical enemy, Reginald,—it came not in bodily shape, or I would have grappled with it, and died defying its vengeance.—It was here—it was here—"

Paul laid his hand upon his forehead.

Reginald arose, and bending over his friend, took his hand within his own, and gazed earnestly into his face.

"Paul," he said, in a tone of unfeigned kindness, "it is one of your Dark Hours!"

"My Dark Hours?"

"You have never told me the story of your life, Paul. For this I do not upbraid you—I do not perchance deserve, and have no desire to intrude upon, your confidence."

"That confidence would blight you into madness."

"On the last night of Seventy-Four, I saw you for the first time. The moment I looked upon your face, Paul, and met the gaze of your eye—while all around fell back from you, with an inexplicable fear—I felt that you were my friend, my brother. I knew, as certainly as though the voice of a spirit had whispered it, that we were linked together, by a hand stronger than the hand of man—mightier even than Death. I saw you, young, frank, thoughtful, but brave and true; and without asking one word of your past life, I took you for what you were, and you became my Brother. That you had lived all your life in these wilds, that your father and your sister were living—this much, indeed, I knew. But all beside was mystery. I seek not now to penetrate that mystery, but I have a few rude words to say to you, Paul, and do not—do not, I beseech, slight my friendship, yes, my brotherhood, with the reproach due only to a heartless curiosity.—You have your dark hours, Paul, and it is this that makes the blood chill in my veins, as, gazing upon your face, I see it shadowed by a cloud, that looks to me like an unutterable despair."

Reginald paused a moment, as if to gather strength; then, with his face flushed and his eye brightening, he continued:

"I have seen you, Paul, gazing with rapture on the setting sun. It was on shipboard, when the ocean, framed in the white clouds that lined the horizon, trembled and blushed in the last flush of day. My arm was round your neck—there was rapture in your face, a calm, deep joy, that indicated a soul at peace with God and man. 'How beautiful!' you exclaimed—'It speaks to me of the other world!' That instant the joy passed from your face; a cloud was on your forehead; your eyes glared with an expression of agony, which I can never forget: and these words passed from your lips, 'My father, my father!' The accent of unutterable anguish which accompanied these words, I have not for an instant forgotten—"

"My father! My father!" groaned Paul, as he hid his face within his hands. "Perjury — Sacrilege — Blasphemy! These are no trifling crimes—"

"It was a Dark Hour, Paul; dark to me, because I could not comprehend, and therefore could not relieve. Many a time, since that hour, have I seen the smile pass from your face, and that strange gloom rush suddenly over your brow, and words as strange—every accent steeped in unutterable despair—fall from your lips. At Lyndulfe, one night, when all was mirth and song, and a crowd gathered round you, listening in delight to your eloquent words—when every eye was centred upon your impassioned

face, and your glance shone with an incessant brightness—even then, Paul, your eye grew vague and glassy, your brow was overspread by that fearful gloom, and you rushed from the scene with a mad cry of anguish. Even then, amid the clamor and dismay created by this sudden change in your demeanor, these words were heard, echoing through the lighted hall—My father! My father! Uttered again, with that accent of despair, too deep for human comprehension, or human relief.”

Paul started to his feet—

“Spare me—spare me—there are incidents in every life that cannot be too lightly touched—”

As he uttered these words, in an impetuous tone, Reginald became suddenly pale.

“Does he speak of that dark night? Can he know Madeline?”

The thought flashed over his mind; it was his turn to shudder and grow pale. The name of Madeline rose to his lips, her ghost to his soul. For a moment not a word was spoken. Paul was gazing in the waters, at the reflection of his agitated face; Reginald sat silent and shuddering.

“Paul, I do not wish to lift the veil which rests upon your heart. But can I do any thing to relieve this misery which covers you with such gloom, and stamps upon your brow the impress of an impenetrable despair? Command me, Paul—I do not say command my gold, for that would be an insult—but command my heart, my arm. They are yours. Even if you have—but no! no! it is impossible. But I will speak it—even if you have committed a crime—”

Reginald never forgot the look with which Paul turned to him—never, until the hour of his death, forgot the accent in which he spoke.

“Crime, once committed, leaves its memory in the soul and on the brow. But crime that *is to be*—does it not fill the soul with its horror, and stamp itself in characters of Prophecy on the hour?”

“Paul! Paul!” cried Reginald, overwhelmed with agony, as the words of Paul penetrated him with awe. “I would give my life to serve you.”

Paul looked upon him with a sad smile.

“Your life opens before you, Reginald, a track of light leading upward, still upward—amid those beautiful clouds, which men call wealth and power. Yourself a lord, your father one of the noblest names on the scroll of British nobility, you have before you an enticing prospect. You will carve for yourself a name on the faces of the battle dead. You will be admired in the senate, welcomed wherever you turn, by the plaudits of the multitude. When your father dies, you will become the Lord of Lyndulfe, of Marionhurst, of Dernburg, of Camelford. Your title, His Grace the Duke of Lyndulfe and Marionhurst! Is it not a glittering prospect, Reginald?

“Then you will take to your bosom some beautiful girl, whose dower will swell your wealth into an incredible revenue, while her beauty will



be mirrored in your children. And with all this you would give your life to serve me! Ha, ha! The Duke of Lyndulfe give his life to serve the fortunes of a houseless and nameless man!"

"It is not well, Paul. It is indeed a Dark Hour, when you mock your friend, your brother."

"Pardon, Reginald, pardon. I only meant to say, that while your future spreads before you all that is most desired by men,—a prospect of light and glory—mine has in store for me nothing but a dishonored name and a grave unblessed by tears."

"Paul, I swear it—I would give my life to serve you!"

"Look yonder, Reginald. Beyond those woods, not one mile from this spot, lies the home of my thought. Ere the setting of the sun, I will stand beside the walls of that home, and see the vines waving about its roof-tree; see the faces of father—of sister, smiling welcome from the old hall door, or I will stand amid a pile of ruins, and fix my eyes upon two graves."

"Father—he lives?"

"Take care, Reginald—it will bring on, once again, the Dark Hour. He did live, on the first day of 1775, when I left this valley. Since that time I have had no word from his pen; nor have I received any intelligence of him or my sister. He may live—he may be dead. A little while and all is over."

"Confide in me. Tell me all. We are alone, Paul—the hour is very still and solemn—I feel as though the spirit which flashes from your eyes, had pervaded my own bosom. Awed by the stillness, the solemnity of this hour, I swear—"

"Hold, my friend. Let us talk no longer of my life, but of yours. Wherefore, on this day of my return to Wissahikon, do I meet you beside these waves? Ah—you blush—there is then some fair lady in the case?"

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## CHAPTER FIFTH.

### THE NEW LOVE OF REGINALD.

"PAUL, I will tell you the history. You have guessed the truth. She is indeed a beautiful girl—"

"She—" and Paul smiled that sad smile, which always filled Reginald with involuntary awe.

"Do you remember the view from the high tower of Lyndulfe? Standing on its summit, you behold the hills and valleys for at least thirty miles, with farm-houses dotting the prospect, and grim castles frowning from the distant woods. Do you remember the ruined castle—"

"It stood upon the west of your father's castle—not ten miles away. A splendid pile of ruins, rising, with its tottering walls, against the dark background, like some ghost of past ages."

"It is a castle of ruins no longer. Soon after you left Lyndulfe, a stranger came to Wyttonhurst—that is the name of the castle, you remember—and soon the old pile of ruins became strong and beautiful again. There were various rumors concerning this stranger. Some said that he had heaped incredible hoards of gold in the East Indies, others spoke of the American Continent. But that he was rich, very rich, no one could deny, for he rebuilt the castle, and soon it was known, that he had been knighted by the king. He was called Sir Ralph Wyttonhurst of Wyttonhurst."

"And this stranger—"

"Was blessed with one of the most beautiful daughters that ever human eye beheld. Not one of those *blonde* women, whose cheeks, like the dawn, are swept by golden hair, and whose beauty is acknowledged as a type of our English women, but a queenly girl, with an olive cheek, eyes intensely black and brilliant, and a step full of majesty and pride. You may be sure that her hair was dark, that her lip, with its warm vermilion, contrasted vividly with the clear brown of her cheek—"

"At his words," muttered Paul, as his eye grew vacant, "that memory comes once more upon me!—And you loved her?" he said aloud.

"I need not tell you how we met, or describe to you the history of our love, in all those minute details, which are interesting only to two persons, the lover and the beloved. But we did meet—well I remember the night, when, amid the dark woods of Wyttonhurst, we plighted our faith to each other."

"Did your father know of this?"

"He discovered our love, and on pain of his eternal displeasure, forbade me ever to meet my betrothed wife. It was an improper alliance, he said, and exclaimed in scorn—"The heir of Lyndulfe unite with the child of a nameless wanderer!"

"Did you obey?"

"I certainly did not. My father then forced upon me a commission in his Majesty's dragoons—look—"

Reginald opened the breast of his hunting-shirt, and the light shone upon a scarlet uniform.

"Take care! You may be seen—you are now on Continental ground."

"Ha, ha, you need have no fear. Yesterday, I left his Majesty's army, —they are encamped somewhere in that chaos of peach trees and sand,

known as New Jersey. I disguised myself, as you see, entered Philadelphia—”

“Your object? Ah, ha, Reginald, have you also your *dark hour*?”

“Madeline!” muttered Reginald, with a changed voice; and then conquering his emotion, he continued in his usual tone—“It was in regard to some matter of deep interest to my father that I came yesterday in disguise to Philadelphia, when, to my surprise and joy, I heard that Sir Ralph Wyttonhurst is now living on his country-seat, near the Wissahikon. His daughter—”

“You have seen her?” interrupted Paul.

“Not yet. I am on my way to meet her at this moment. They tell me that the mansion of her father stands among the pines, on the Wissahikon, a mile or two from this spot, near the Schuylkill.”

“Strange!” murmured Paul, as he saw his own face, mirrored in the waves, suddenly flush into something like rapture—“Dark-eyed, hair black as midnight, a step like a queen, eyes beaming with the tender prophecies of youth and hope! So like that beautiful dream, which flashed over the slumber of my life, and woke me into suffering and manhood. Even now I see her, as she stood before the door of that fatal chamber, the light streaming over the beautiful face, as she suffered her dark hair to wander wildly over her shoulders—”

“Of whom do you speak?” cried Reginald, in amazement—“Do you also love?”

“Love?”—again that bitter smile—“Why should I devote beauty and innocence to the terrible vengeance of my destiny? You said that the mansion of Wyttonhurst stood in a grove of pines, near the Schuylkill?”

“So the country folks tell me.”

“It must be near her home—the Wizard’s daughter! Does she yet live? Shall I ever more hear the music of her voice, or be roused into madness by her touch? After *I have been home*—home! Home! Yes, after I have been home, I will ascend the hill, on whose summit stands the house of Isaac the Wizard. Passing through the grove of pines, I will look upon the window of that chamber where we met, and behold her face—hers—bathed in the glory of sunset. Or perchance there is a grave among the pines, a grave overspread with wild flowers, and sacred with her ashes.”

“But tell me, Paul, the history of your life since you left Lyndulfe—”

“Let me compress ages of thought and suffering in a word. I left this valley, where my life had been spent, an enthusiast, a dreamer. I knew nothing of mankind save from my books,—the hour before I hurried from Wissahikon, and met you in the street of Philadelphia, I had known for the first time, how dark, how fathomless were the abysses of my own soul. Now, Reginald, I have seen the world. *I have seen the world*. Does not that sentence speak the entire history?”



“You have been in Italy?”

“In France—in Italy—in Germany—in Spain—in Russia. Everywhere the same story is telling every hour, a story told in the groans of those who are born to suffer and die, in the laughter of those who are born to trample and to kill! Amid the majestic ruins of that dream-land called Italy, amid the corn-fields of France, amid the vine-clad hills of Germany, amid the dreary wastes of Russia, I have beheld in various forms, the same terrible fact—a Peasant crushed to the earth, loaded with chains, baptizing that earth with his blood and tears, and a Lord standing with his foot upon the Peasant’s neck, mocking his anguish with laughter, and turning his blood, his tears, into gold. That is, after all, the picture which the whole world offers to the eye of God—a Slave and a Lord. Both brothers, born alike of the same dust, going alike to the same grave-worm, redeemed alike by the anguish of Calvary, and yet, one tramples the other, loads him with chains and scorn, and turns his blood and tears into gold.”

“Yet there must be classes in the world, Paul. There must be lords and peasants. There must be kings and subjects. There must be rich and poor.”

“There was another sight which I saw, Reginald—a sight that affected me deeply. Even as the Peasant, crushed to the earth by those chains—called Custom, Power, and other fine-sounding names—felt the foot of the Lord upon his neck, and shed upon the earth the baptism of the Poor—blood and tears, only blood and tears—even then, Reginald, as the laughter of the Lord mocked that chained Peasant’s anguish, while the alembics of Priestcraft and Kingcraft—fine names! transmuted the blood and tears into gold—even then I saw the Peasant’s dusky face lighted by a sudden fire. I saw him spring from the dust, and trample his chains under his bleeding feet. Then, Reginald, I witnessed a new baptism. There was no longer a Peasant before me, but a Demon—a Demon raving on his wrongs, and bathing his scarred limbs in blood, the blood of the rich, the noble, the blood of the gifted and the beautiful.—I asked the meaning of this sight, and a voice answered, ‘It is the new Baptism, which God hath in store for the poor.’”—

Paul stood erect, his hands outstretched toward the western sky, his features stamped with a sombre enthusiasm.

“Do you not perceive, Paul, that sentiments like these will apply very dangerously to the present contest between the Revolted Colonies and the King?”

“The King!” echoed Paul, in a tone that echoed strangely through the stillness of the forest—“Always the King! Speak to the man of titles and wealth, of the poor dying by millions, dying in famine, in battle, in plague, and you are answered by a word, ‘The King!’ Let the poor die a thousand deaths in one, let them suffer such slow anguish as would

bring the blush to a devil's cheek, but, be very careful of the King. Be very tender with the Rich. Let no rough wind blow too rudely upon the round cheek of the Priest. Reginald, Reginald, it is enough to drive one mad to see these Kings, hedged round by law, by custom; made holy by Religion, defended by ranks of nobles, priests and rich men; while the Poor are turned out by millions into the dark night of hopeless toil, and left to blunder in wounds and in blindness to the grave. King! Did I think that the earth, one hundred years from this hour, would be cursed by one monster, who, calling himself King, Priest, or Rich Man, only lives to trample his brothers into the grave, I would kneel here, and beseech that God, who looks not unheedingly upon the fall of a sparrow, to arouse at once the Demon in the breast of the slave, and let the New Baptism at once begin."

As if in witness of the sincerity of his thought, he raised his right hand to heaven.

"There is force in your words; but have a care! Let the mob once hear and believe sentiments like these, and there is an end of all order, all government. In the place of Law, we will have anarchy, and for King George at the head of the British Nation, we will only have Rebel Washington at the head of a mob."

"Washington!" echoed Paul—starting as though some memory found a voice in the utterance of that word.

"One day, resting on a rock which yawned over an abyss amid the Alps, I heard that name. It was from the lips of a wanderer, who, cast like myself, a pilgrim on the face of the earth, had amid his journeyings traversed this land of the New World. His face was haggard; his attire, covered with dust, scarce concealed the sharp outlines of his withered frame. That haggard face was suddenly flushed, that withered frame as suddenly dilated, as with the throbbings of a new life, while he uttered a name which, in his wanderings, he had gathered to his heart. He spoke of battles, of dreary marches at dead of night, of a band of ragged peasants pursued by the armed soldiers of a King. Of farm-houses fired at dead of night by ruffian soldiery, and of old men butchered on the threshold stone. Of virgins torn from their slumber by the hand of brutal outrage, and dishonored—outraged—amid the shouts of armed spectators. Of a band of mechanics and farmers, who, aroused into energy by these accumulated wrongs, assembled one day, in a City of the New World, and in the face of mankind, and by the name of God, solemnly declared against the King and his hired murderers. Of one man, who kept a rebel band together in the face of unimaginable perils—in face of starvation, nakedness and treason—who, with a mob of half-naked and starving peasants, confronted the splendid armies of a King, and drove them like frightened sheep before the hounds, from a Christmas revel, at a town called

Trenton. The name of that man was Washington. The story touched me deeply. I could not help but love that man!"

"Paul—Paul, can I indeed believe my ears? You preach treason and sanctify revolt with words like these? I cannot hear any more of this—I am an officer of the King!"

He laid his hand upon the scarlet uniform, which was visible through the folds of his hunting-shirt.

"But you are something else, my dear Reginald. An officer of the King—a Lord—heir to a Dukedom—something more even than these. A Man! You have blood in your veins—does it bound more freely when you reflect that, hired by a King, to do the work of murder, it is now your duty, your solemn duty to—cut my throat?"

His face was convulsed with mocking laughter.

"Ah—Paul—it is not my friend that speaks. I do not know my brother's voice. That tone, that smile do not belong to you—"

"Washington!" cried Paul, gazing into the waters with an absent glance. "It is a new name in the history of the world. I do not remember it in the blood-red volume of British heraldry."

"It is the name of a Rebel," exclaimed Reginald, with a frown; "there is a price upon his head—"

"Shall he indeed prove worthy of his task, and shine forth from the clouds of Revolution, the Father of his Country? Or, shall he sink into the degraded herd of Kings, and gasp his last breath amid the curses of an enslaved People, leaving only these words as a record of his life—

"‘I founded a Dynasty and died.’"

"Tut—tut—Paul; we've had enough of this nonsense. Before December, the British army will occupy Philadelphia, and—ha, ha, it may be—the head of Mister Washington will adorn the gate of London!"

And the handsome Lord graced his words with a pleasant smile.

"There was a man, Reginald, who rose from the Mob, and made England great; for, from the brute form of vassaldom, he struck into rugged life, the image of a People. He was named Cromwell. He died, leaving the greatness of England, achieved by his own hand, as his only monument. His body was soon after rooted from its grave, his limbs torn into fragments—nailed to gibbets—hurled into the offal of the streets. This was some time ago. Can you tell me, Reginald, which name looks nobler now in history, the King Charles the Second, or the Brewer Cromwell?

"He was a Traitor—a Regicide."

This time Reginald frowned.

"Yes, it is true. He helped to kill a King, who had given, not long before, his best friend to the scaffold.—Ah, it is enough to force a smile upon lips of stone! To talk of treason against a King. There is no such thing. There can be no treason committed against a King, for Kings are only Kings because they have been traitors to God and man."



"Washington! Is he indeed the man for the age, or must the People look for another? Ah—I remember—the name in the Urn——"

Paul was silent. The Last Night rushed upon his memory again.

"Paul, you surely do not imagine, that the idle Declaration, promulgated by the—ha, ha—the Continental Congress, will ever influence the destinies of Europe?"

"A Thought never dies, Reginald. The Thought of the Gospel was uttered by certain Galilean fisherman, in the face of all the kings in the world. This was seventeen hundred years ago. And now that Thought is embodied once more—it is uttered once again in this Declaration. Do you think that Thought has lived seventeen hundred years—lived in the face of kings and their brutal laws—to die at last without an echo? A thought that lives, is only a deed struggling into birth. Can you, or can any man foretell the deeds which that Thought will create, within the next hundred years?"

"Even now, that Thought moves in the heart of Europe, like a living heart in the breast of a corpse."

"You talk, it seems—ha, ha—Paul, you must pardon the smile. But you talk of a Revolution in Europe. Forgive me if I am dull of comprehension."

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## CHAPTER SIXTH.

PAUL TELLS THE STORY OF THE LADY WHOM HE MET IN THE GARDENS  
OF A ROYAL PALACE.

"ONE summer day, Reginald, I found myself lost amid the mazes of one of those beautiful gardens, which wear royal homes upon their fragrant hearts. It was in France; and I strayed along the walks of the Great Trianon. There were deep shadows all around me, and a breathless silence reigned on every side. Shadows that were broken by wandering rays of light, silence that was roused into gentle music by the lull of a distant fountain.

"As I wandered absently along, I suddenly beheld, standing in my path, the image of a beautiful girl. Her loosened robe flowed freely around the outlines of a voluptuous shape; and her pale golden hair streamed in unbound tresses to her shoulders. There was no coronet upon her hair,

no gem upon her plain white robe, and yet, as she raised her mild blue eyes upon me, while her brow grew dark as with wonder at my intrusion upon her lonely walk, I felt that I stood in the presence of a lady of rank and power. I stood hesitating—my eyes enchained by her beautiful face—while I was conscious that my presence was an intrusion, yes, an insult. Retreating with an involuntary bow, I cast my eyes to the ground, when her voice arrested my footsteps.

“‘Stay!’ she cried, ‘I have waited for you!’

“There was a bewitching music in her voice. At the sound I turned, and stood wondering and confused before her. I shall never forget the look of dignity mingled with fear, which she cast upon me, as with a proud gesture she beckoned me to approach.

“‘I have waited for you,’ she said once more with a haughty accent—‘I have been told that you can read the future.’

“Completely bewildered, I knew not what to say. It did not occur to me that she had taken me for some other person; perchance one of those astrologers, who, at that time, prevailed in the atmosphere of the French Court. Indeed, it seemed to me, that this singular meeting was the especial act of Providence—or Destiny.

“‘I do not ask you to read my fate in the Heavens—’ she said, while a sad smile gave a new beauty to her countenance—‘You need not consult the stars, in order to tell me that which is to be. But for three nights my slumbers have been visited by a dream—a dream, whether sent from God or from the Evil One you can best determine.’

“‘Dreams are but the prophecies of the soul,’ I answered, as though the words had been uttered in my ear by an invisible friend—‘When awake, the soul, trammelled by the flesh, can only retain the impressions of the Past. But it is in *sleep that the Future becomes to her a Memory*. It is in sleep that the soul rises into her immortal power, and forgets all consciousness of time, and knows by name, neither Past nor Future. In sleep the past and future are one—then the Soul, indeed starting from the trammels of flesh, rises into the atmosphere of immortality.’

“Even now. I see that young countenance, so fair, so delicate in complexion, with its mild blue eyes and pale golden hair! She was like Catharine—ah! That word speaks to me of Home! Only there was never a frown on Catharine’s brow, never one gleam of pride in her calm, deep eyes.

“‘Listen, while I repeat my dream,’ exclaimed the unknown lady; and while I stood wondering and dumb, she spoke in a low silvery accent, which now quivered with fear, and again grew faint, almost inaudible with preternatural awe.

“I do not repeat this dream, because it is so wild and strange—no! no! But I cannot banish it from my eyes—it is ever before me—even now it is there, between me and the sunlight.”

"With an accent of terror that I can never forget, she turned away from a flood of light, which came gushing through an interval in the foliage.

"'It is there—drawn distinctly upon the shadows—there' Do you not see it—that hideous phantom?"

"She covered her face with her hands, and I could see her cheek grow pale as death.

"I was wandering along a lofty hall, hung with tapestry, beautiful as the rainbow of the summer evening, and adorned with images of pure marble, and pictures, which did not seem pictures, but living souls, imprisoned in canvass. I was alone, and as I went straying through that chamber—whose magnificence even now bewilders me—I heard voices murmuring my name, with accents of idolatrous praise; and it seemed to me that I was the Queen of a World, and that the very sunlight shone for me. The tapestry bore my image in a thousand forms—my face was in every statue—the very flowers seen through the casements, bloomed for me—for me alone. Oh, it was a bewildering dream, and, grown mad with the consciousness of beauty and power, fired by the accents of the flattering voices, which called me "Goddess—Divine Queen," I raised my hand toward the lofty ceiling, and—it makes the blood freeze in my veins—defied God—yes, I defied God—I dared Almighty power to crush my power, or wither my beauty.'

"The beautiful girl once more hid her face with her hands. It was not until some moments had elapsed that she gathered strength to proceed.

"'Even then, as I stood in the act of blasphemy, with my hand uplifted, and the words of defiance on my lips, my attention was attracted by a window, which was veiled, not by rich folds of purple tapestry, but by a black cloth, drooping without a fold from the ceiling to the floor. An impulse that I could not comprehend, hurried me to the window, and forced me with my own hands to draw aside the dismal curtain. I beheld——'

"She shuddered.

"'I beheld, not a far-extending prospect of gardens and fountains, embosomed in the shade of lofty trees, and adorned with palaces of marble. No! It was a wide plain, in the heart of a great city,—a wide plain, framed by huts and palaces, and crowded with one black mass of heads, that met my eye. Thousands and tens of thousands were gathered there; it was an awful sea of life, undulating to and fro with a ceaseless motion. The air was steeped in a dead stillness, only broken by a hoarse murmur.

"'Gazing upon this countless multitude, I beheld, in the centre of that sea of upturned faces, the object around which it undulated in unceasing waves.

"'That object was very far away from where I stood, and yet I saw it distinctly, and drank in every minute detail.



“ ‘It was a platform, surmounted by two upright pieces of timber, connected at the top by a horizontal beam. At the foot of one of these upright pieces of timber was a block; near that block, a heap of sawdust, and standing upon the sawdust, a half-naked figure, whose bared arm was raised above his head, while his hand clutched a rope. That rope was attached to an axe, which glimmered near the horizontal beam.

“ ‘Even now I see it; that black structure rising over the sea of heads against the cold blue sky!’

“ ‘The young woman pressed her hands upon her breast, as though to still the mad pulsations of her heart, while her expanded eyes glared upon the vacant air, and her lips murmured in a tone almost inaudible—It is there—there! The axe glitters in that passing ray!’

“ ‘After a moment, growing more composed, she continued:

“ ‘Suddenly, a lane was made through this immense multitude; a lane which reached from its very edge to the foot of the platform. There was an unnatural stillness upon the scene; I could hear the rolling of wheels, and presently saw the head of a horse rising above the crowd. That horse was attached to a rude vehicle, in which stood a solitary figure, a half-naked woman, whose dishevelled hair flowed over her bared bosom. Whenever I attempted to gaze upon her face, a mist came over my eyes: but I saw her form; it was very beautiful—the sun shone over a bosom white as snow.

“ ‘The rude vehicle, rolling slowly on with a grating sound, was bearing this lovely woman toward the platform.

“ ‘I could not turn my gaze away from her form; my heart bled for her—she seemed so terribly alone, in the midst of that countless multitude. And as she came on, the stillness deepened—now and then a sudden cry was heard—a short, wild ejaculation—and all was still again.

“ ‘Oh, how earnestly I endeavored to chase away that mist which came between my sight and the face of this lovely woman! It was in vain—I could not trace one line of her countenance—her hair waved over her shoulders, and her bosom shone in the sun, but her face was a shadow.

“ ‘The vehicle reached the foot of the platform. They had taken her from my view, but in a moment she appeared again. They were leading her up the steps—I saw her stand upon the platform, near the half-naked man, her white bosom gleaming in the sun.

“ ‘The breathless stillness of the multitude grew deeper.

“ ‘I was gazing at her fair round neck, when—O God! O God—the hand of the half-naked man was laid upon it—he was forcing her upon her knees. Hark! A cry of smothered agony—her neck rests upon the block, and her long hair streams over the saw-dust.

“ ‘The stillness becomes more intense.

“ ‘There is a low brooding murmur—the axe is glimmering there over

the white neck of the lovely woman—it falls—there is a torrent of blood pouring upon the saw-dust from a headless trunk—there is a head rolling over the floor of the platform, the long hair cumbered with blood-stained dust!

“‘The silence of the crowd is broken at last. One horrible yell, swelled by ten thousand voices, peals into the sky—it was as though the damned, released from their torment for a while, had come to hold their infernal jubilee in the light of day.

“‘That half-naked man seized the severed head, and holding it by the hair, exposed the face to the gaze of the crowd. The sun shone vividly upon it—writhing with the last pang, I saw it,—with the glow of life and the blue tinge of death struggling upon its cheeks—at last I saw and knew that face.

“‘Behold,’ cried the half-naked man, tossing it in the light—‘Behold the head of the Traitress—the last of an accursed brood—MARIE ANTOINETTE!’

“‘It was my own face which I saw, held by the blood-stained hair in the light of the sun.’

“She paused for a moment, and pressed her delicate right hand to her forehead—her cheek was livid, her lips colorless.

“‘Dumb with horror, I started from the window, and turned my gaze once more upon the magnificence of the lofty hall. The statues looked pure and beautiful, the pictures glowed with rosy warmth, the tapestry, trembling gently, seemed like a thousand rainbows joined in one. But I could not banish that terrible scene—I saw, wherever I turned, the bleeding head, held by the dishevelled hair, with the last pang quivering over the face.

“‘Then a confused cry broke on the silence—a crowd of half-naked and bloody forms came rushing into the lofty hall, staining the white statues with their crimsoned hands, and reeling with demoniac gestures over the marble floor.

“‘Shuddering and cold, I shrunk within the folds of the tapestry, and saw one form taller than the rest, dragging a headless body over the floor. It was the body of a naked woman, with blood upon her breast, and the print of brutal feet upon her beautiful limbs. While it was dragged along the floor, the broken arm grasped by the ruffian’s hand—there was a head tossing to and fro, under the feet of the crowd—once I saw it, as it whirled by me, the long hair streaming in the air. It was horribly disfigured, clotted all over with drops of blood—but it was my own face which I saw.’

“As these words fell from her colorless lips, her hands drooped by her side, and her hair seemed to rise upon her forehead. Never have I beheld, even in the wildest creation of the artist’s pencil, a more impressive picture of unnatural fear. For some moments she stood gazing fixedly into my

face, and the sunshine stole in a subdued glow over her pale golden hair and colorless cheek.

“‘For three times have I beheld this vision,’ she said in a faltering voice—‘Three nights in succession it has visited my couch. \* \* \* Thou canst read the future—read for me this terrible dream \* \* \* tell me—’

“She was silent. Amazed, confounded, I knew not how to answer her. Was it indeed a woman of royal race that I beheld, or some frenzied daughter of the poor?

“‘You desire reward,’ she exclaimed, ‘take this ring and tell me—’

“Scarce knowing where I stood, I took the ring and placed it on my finger, while my eye was riveted by the surpassing whiteness of her neck.

“Even as I gazed, that neck was encircled by a livid line—I felt the words that I uttered before, rising again to my lips.

“Dreams are but the Prophecies of the Soul. When awake, the soul, trammelled by flesh, can only retain the impressions of the Past. It is in sleep that the Future becomes to her a Memory.”

Paul ceased, and wiped the moisture from his forehead.

Reginald, utterly absorbed by the singular narrative, sat with his elbows placed upon his knees, his cheeks resting on his hands, and his eye fixed upon the stream. Once or twice, as Paul went on in his history, Reginald had looked up, and been startled by the unnatural excitement of that bronzed visage. He shrank from the sight of those dazzling eyes.

Paul was silent, but some moments elapsed ere he could rouse himself from the profound reverie into which he was plunged.

At last, raising his eyes, he beheld Paul standing near, his arms folded and his eyes fixed upon the undimpled stream. The unnatural pallor of his face only made his eyes seem more wildly lustrous. His forehead was bare—it shone in the sun, and the wind agitated the locks of his dark brown hair.

“He looks like a prophet or a madman!” thought Reginald.

“Why, you are pale, my brother,” cried Paul, turning suddenly round.

“There is no color in your face. Can it be that you give credence to an idle legend such as I have told?”

“But the woman whom you saw in the gardens of the Great Trianon,” exclaimed Reginald, in a voice that was faint and tremulous. “Was she indeed the Queen? was she indeed Marie Antoinette? Do you think her dream will ever become reality? That the people of France will lay the head of their Queen upon the block?”

A smile darted over Paul’s face.

“There was once a King called Charles the First, and a Brewer named Cromwell—” he said.

Reginald was silent.



The incident related by Paul, whose dark eye shone as with inspiration, sank deep in his heart. With an involuntary shudder, he gathered his blue hunting-frock over his red uniform.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTH.

### THE BROKEN BUT NOT DIVIDED COIN.

"But come, Reginald—the sun is declining toward the western horizon—*I must go home.*"

Paul uttered the italicized words with an accent of profound sadness.

"My way lies in this direction:" he pointed to the north-west—"Beyond those woods I shall soon learn the secret of my fate. Father—Catharine—"

"And mine in this,"—Reginald pointed to the south-west—"within an hour I hope to behold my lady-love."

The color came to his cheek, and there was a joyous smile on the face of the handsome soldier.

"Imagine the face of my dear father, when he hears that his dutiful son and the Baronet's daughter, separated from each other in the woods of Yorkshire, have met in the wilderness of Wissahikon. Ha! ha! his face will present a picture in which indignation and laughter struggle for the mastery."

He raised his rifle, and placed the cap upon his chestnut curls.

"You will not marry this lady without your father's consent?"

"I'faith, you are altogether too sober, brother Paul! Wandering amid these delicious solitudes together, we will leave 'marriage'—'settlements,' et cetera, to the old folks. It is an awkward word, that 'marriage.' I never yet could think of it while watching my own image in the eyes of a beautiful girl."

"But, Reginald, you would not think of committing a wrong—" There was a profound sadness in the countenance of Paul.

"While sitting beside a lovely woman, I would not like to think of any thing but her—even if I could. Do not talk of 'thinking' in such a case, friend Paul. What matters all our thoughts—are we not driven onward by a power that we cannot see, and certainly do not comprehend? Observe that flower, floating on the bosom of the stream—look how smoothly it glides onward. Can you foretel the fate of that flower, Paul? Whether

it will lodge on the right bank or the left, or be drowned in the waterfall below? Or whether it will be 'fished out' of the stream by some truant school-boy, armed with a stick, with a yard of thread and a pin-hook at the end?"

The quiet dell echoed with the somewhat boisterous laughter of the young soldier.

Paul turned upon him with a stare of wonder.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Reginald—"You with all your thought cannot change the course of that flower. Nor can the flower itself alter its course one tittle. Paul, our life is precisely like the flower—we drop from another world, perchance from some branch of an immortal tree—the stream that bears us is called Fate, Destiny, Providence. If it leaves us on the right bank, we wither; if on the left, we die; or if it carries us over the falls, we are lost. Even should we escape the right bank and the left, and ride safely through the whirlpool, here comes some truant Chance, and 'fishes us up' with something full as ridiculous as a stick, a yard of thread and a pin-hook."

Paul looked upon the glowing face of Reginald—marked his athletic form—his lip curling in a smile—his cheek flushed with vigorous physical beauty—and uttered a sigh.

It was a moment ere he answered him.

"It is one thing, Reginald, to plunge madly into wrong, and call it Fate, and it is another thing to feel ourselves every hour whirled by an invisible hand toward some horrible crime—whirled onward, despite all your struggles, your prayers, your tears. That indeed is Destiny—Fate—"

"But *she* is so very beautiful, Paul—lips that pout with passion; eyes that fire your blood; wavy hair, that makes your fingers mad to clasp it; a step that at once glides over and spurns the earth; cheeks whose clear brown is ripened by a rose-bud flush.—Ah! Paul, Youth and Love mixed in one cup make such a bewitching draught, that one cannot help but drink it!"

"Reginald," said a voice, that seemed wrung from the very heart—"You could not, on any pretence, do wrong to this girl, *who has trusted in you?*"

As he spoke, Paul stood with folded arms, his melancholy face invested with a wild spiritual grandeur. Reginald, glowing before him, with flushed cheeks, shadowed by chesnut curls, presented a striking ideal of physical beauty.

"Do wrong to her—ha, ha! I don't think of it! You tell me that you have seen the world, and yet talk so gravely about an affair of this kind? I love her, Paul, would die for her, but——"

The sentence was broken by an ejaculation from the lips of Paul. Had it been completed, the entire thread of this history would have been changed.

"But"—*I cannot wait for marriage*, he would have said, when the exclamation broke the sentence.

"She is beautiful?" cried Paul—"Her name?"

A strange name, Paul—altogether picturesque and romantic. 'LEOLA!'"

"'Leola!'"—It is like music heard at dead of night, over the waters of a still lake. *I never called her by name—*" he added, with a sigh.

"When will we meet again?" exclaimed Reginald, as he stood with rifle on his shoulder, ready to depart.

"In the depth of the woods, near the point where the Wissahikon empties in the Schuylkill, there stood, some time ago, a colossal tree, its trunk like a column of some pagan temple, its wide-branching limbs leafless and withered. It stood desolate and alone, amid the glad summer trees, a sad image of Aged Despair, glaring in the face of Youthful Hope. It stood near a rock, imprinted with the mark of a human foot beside a cloven hoof—and stood where the setting sun always shed its last and kindest glow. We will meet there at sunset, Reginald. You will tell me of your love—"

"And you will tell me how you went home, and was welcomed by your father's blessing and your sister's kiss."

Paul turned his face away; Reginald saw his form agitated, but could not look upon the expression of his countenance.

"Father—Sister—" these words were audible amid the muttered ejaculations which came from the lips of Paul.

"At sunset, under the blasted pine," he said, raising his face, and abruptly turned away, his mantle floating from his shoulder, and his plume rising between the eye of Reginald and the sun.

But as suddenly turning again, he placed his hand within his breast, and drew forth a broken coin, attached to a chain of delicately worked steel.

"You remember this, Reginald?"

At once, Reginald dashed his rifle to the ground, and placing his hand within his hunting-shirt and red uniform, drew forth a similar fragment, attached also to a chain of fine steel.

"I have always worn it since that hour!"

These fragments were the separate halves of a silver shilling, stamped with the image of George the Second, and bearing date 1732. The half which Paul held in the light, bore the figures 17; while on Reginald's fragment the figures 32 were distinctly seen.

"You remember the night, Reginald, when we broke this coin, in the woods of Lyndulfe, and swore to be as brothers to each other, until death?"

"I have never forgotten it, Paul—"

"In case one of us should, at any time, be placed in a position of extremity, he should send to the other his fragment of coin—"

"And the one who received this coin, should hasten to his brother's aid,



in face of all dangers, regardless of all other ties or obligations. I remember it, Paul!"

"Join hands with me, Reginald, and let us in the sight of God renew our pledge of Brotherhood."

"We will be true to each other, and on no extremity nor danger desert each other, but cherish for ever the solemn symbol of the broken, but not divided coin,—broken, but not divided, for its separate pieces are moved by two hearts joined in one, by the holy tie of Brotherhood."

"Brother Paul!"

"Brother Reginald?"

Their hands were clasped; their eyes, centred on each other's faces, were moistened with tears. In this dark world there are many horrible realities, but it seems to me, that the friendship—the Brotherhood—of two true-hearted men, is among those things which make the angels less sorrowful for the crimes of earth, and even wake the cold malice of a devil's soul into something akin to love.

"At sunset, under the blasted pine!" cried Paul, as he turned away.

Reginald gazed after him, as he threaded his way among the rocks on the western bank of the stream. He saw him winding near the waterside, his form half-hidden by the thickly clustered bushes, while the sunlight shone only upon his hair, surmounted by the dark cap and the slender plume.

"There goes as noble a heart as ever throbbed, and some sorrow that I cannot comprehend, crushes him to the earth!"

At this moment Paul appeared in sight again, standing upon a rock, some distance up the stream, which received the warm sunshine on its breast. His face, thrown in strong profile, stood out from the shadows of the distant woods, and glowed in vivid light. His arms were outspread; he seemed absorbed in some thought of voiceless prayer.

"He is praying that he may behold his father's white hairs, and be welcomed by a sister's kiss," muttered Reginald—"Ah! He descends from the rock,—he stands upon the fallen tree, which reaches from shore to shore—with his eyes turned unceasingly to the north-west, he crosses the stream. \* \* \* He is lost in the shadows of the woods, and I am alone."

The sun was sinking in the west, and the shadows came thicker over the dell. There are nooks beside the Wissahikon, where noonday is as twilight, and evening wears the darkness of midnight. This dell, opening suddenly upon the stream, as from a cleft in the forest, with a wall of leaves on either hand, was full of cheerful light at the midday hour, but no sooner did the day begin to decline, than it was rendered sad and gloomy by a twilight shadow. True, there was a joy in its very sadness, a holy calm in its very gloom, but as Reginald glanced around him, he felt the quiet, the shadow of the place, impress every sense with a feeling of awe.

"I am alone," he murmured, gazing now at a wandering burst of sunshine, now upon the waveless stream, brooding under a veil of shadow—"Alone!"

That word startled the silence with a strange echo. Alone with his own soul, alone with the memory that pointed terribly to the Past, with the hope that trembled amid its gladness, as it looked to the future.

There was a chaos of thoughts crowding over the brain of the gallant soldier.

As if in the attempt to banish thought, he began to hum a merry air, which he had heard at some boisterous festival of the camp; but it came faintly from his lips, and suddenly died away without an echo.

He beheld the dove that had been killed by his shot; it lay near his feet, with its head resting between the folded wings, and the red stain upon its bosom. The young man raised it, pressed its plumage gently, and murmured a single word—

"Madeline!"

Then the Last Night rushed upon his memory in vivid and distinct details. He saw the white form kneeling in the lonely chamber, he heard the voice pleading for mercy, in the name of God—he bared the young breast, and fell back affrighted and cold before a fatal Revelation. Thus all the scenes of that fearful night came crowding upon him at once, until he was affrighted and cold again.

"Would to God I had never entered the confines of this valley! Well do I remember the phantom that warned me back—it is before me now—I cannot banish its words from my ears. How carelessly I came to the farm-house on that night—the cup was drugged—the outrage planned—but, like a madman chased by the frenzies of his own brain, I fled from the house and from the Wissahikon in the daybreak hour. Madeline! Madeline!"

It was *his* Dark Hour.

His changing color and wandering eye, and brow damp with moisture, all betrayed the force of his emotion.

"I have not seen the Merchant who was entrusted by my father with this secret, since I left Philadelphia. Has he obtained any clue to the mystery? Does Madeline live? I dare not question the people of the valley—they might recognise me, and suspect me of the murder. Better that suspicion, ay, much better the guilt of murder itself, than—"

His voice died away in a murmur; his face, so fascinating in its manly beauty, was terribly agitated.

"Leola!" he exclaimed, and the cloud passed from his brow.

## CHAPTER EIGHTH.

## PAUL GOES TOWARD HIS HOME.

PAUL crossed the Wissahikon by means of the fallen tree, and ascending the opposite bank, plunged into the shadow of the woods. As he threaded his way over the earth, strewn with withered pine leaves, while the huge trunks were dimly seen on every side, his face was still turned to the north-west.

He strode rapidly onward, until the sombre depths and unnatural stillness of the pines was succeeded by a thicket full of flowers and sunshine, with green boughs stretching across his path at every step. But the sunlight that danced so merrily among the leaves and blossoms, did not chase the settled gloom from his face, nor did the luxurious atmosphere of June, steeped in fragrance and musical with the hum of bees, call one glow of rapture to his cheek. Ever turning his eyes to the north-west, he threaded the windings of the faintly defined pathway, while the gloom came darker over his face.

It was a pathway rarely trodden; it led among the wildest recesses of the woods, and led toward the Home of Paul. In a few moments he would be there; he would behold the old Block-house smiling under its garmenture of vines and flowers.

Paul felt his knees bend under him, and wiped the cold moisture from his brow. Every moment brought him nearer to that Home; soon he would know the worst.

His thoughts became vague and dream-like. He was again a wanderer over the face of the earth. Again he stood in the streets of Paris, an unknown and friendless man, alone in a desert of strange people. Again he trod the soil of Germany, and paused for a while amid the chivalric student people of Heidelberg, and heard their earnest songs, chorused by the clash of swords, swelling deep and far over the bosom of the Rhine. Then he was on the way that leads through a dark wood, to the summit of a craggy hill, from whence you may drink in the valley of the Arno, with Florence glittering on its breast. He was in Rome, at dead of night, in the great Temple of St. Peter's, with only a single light burning through its profound gloom—alone at dead of night in that great temple, whose dome is itself a sky. He was in Rome, in the Catacombs—the city of the dead sunken under the feet of the living millions—he knelt by the graves of martyrs, and, oppressed by the memories of the place, felt his soul glide away into the New World, where the father and the sister were waiting for him.



And with these thoughts of his pilgrimage over Europe—a pilgrimage accomplished on foot, with but little money and no friends, save those whom his sad visage won by the way—there came other and wilder thoughts of adventures too strange for belief.

He thought of the night when, belated among the Hartz mountains, whose abrupt cliffs and pines and shadows reminded him of his own Wissahikon, a voice spoke to him, and—

Paul dared not pursue the thought. He shuddered as it crossed his mind.

And as he banished the memory of the Hartz mountains, the thought of his Father, his Sister, his Home came back with overwhelming force.

“I cannot go on!” he cried, and flung himself at the foot of a wild poplar tree—“How can I look upon my father’s face, when there is Perjury written upon mine?”

Again the cold moisture gathered on his brow—he raised his right hand to dash it away—when his eye assumed an unnatural brightness, and he gazed upon the half-raised hand with a look of singular interest.

“This hand—this hand—” he muttered, and springing from the seat at the foot of the wild poplar, hurried on his way.

There was a strip of wood to be passed, a lane to be crossed, a gentle hill to be ascended, and then his feet would press the wild grass of the winding road which led to the gate of the Monastery.

Paul hurried through the strip of wood, and descended the steep bank into the lane, which led from the Wissahikon to the Schuylkill. He was hurrying toward the opposite bank, when his ear caught the sound of a footstep. A man attired in the garb of a laborer was journeying slowly along the road with a scythe on his shoulder.

Paul waited until he approached.

“Can you tell me, friend, whether the old man still lives in the Block-house yonder?”

The laborer started at the sound of the voice—looked in Paul’s face with a vacant stare, while his rugged visage was stamped with an expression of intense terror.

“The old man—sometimes called the Priest of Wissahikon—does he still live yonder?”

Paul held his breath as he awaited an answer to this question. But the laborer did not answer; he stood in the centre of the road like one stricken dumb by the hand of Heaven; his eyes dilating and every line of his face agitated by terror.

The suspense of Paul amounted to agony.

“Speak! Does the old man yet live? The old man who lived in the Block-house, not two hundred yards from where you stand. Is he yet alive?”

As he spoke, he advanced, his whole frame trembling with emotion.

The laborer uttered a faint cry, dropped his scythe in the road, and darted up the bank and into the bushes as though he had been pursued by a wild beast.

"What can it mean? Is the curse of Cain indeed written on my forehead?"

Paul remained standing in the centre of the road, absorbed in thought. After a moment he raised his eyes; there was a noble poplar tree standing on the verge of the opposite bank, its broad green leaves intermingled with flowers that resembled cups of gold adorned with pearl. At sight of this tree, which stood alone, reaching forth its magnificent branches on every side, all the associations of his youth rushed upon the soul of the Wanderer.

Beneath that tree, on the night of his flight, he had hesitated for an instant—uncertain whether to go back and fling himself at his father's feet, or to rush forward into the unknown world, an outcast, stamped with the brand of Cain.

Two hundred yards from that tree stood the Monastery of Wissahikon.

Maddened by this monument of the Past, this green memorial of his crime, Paul ascended the bank, and darting over the irregular fence, hurried blindly onward. It was not long before his feet pressed the winding road which led to the Block-house gate.

Do not picture to yourself a smooth path, paved with brown pebbles, and bordered by regularly planted flowers, with the limbs of carefully clipped trees arching overhead. But picture a road whose traces are almost lost in a growth of wild grass overspread with briers—a devious road, wandering among trees of every shape and kind, with brushwood starting in luxuriant vegetation, all about their massive trunks. A road that now strikes to the east, now to the west, at this point comes out in sunlight, and yonder hides itself beneath the branches that bend down until their leaves are mingled with the rank grass.

Paul gazed upon the few paces of the road which were visible, and felt that every thing announced decay and desolation. The deep hollows dug by wheels in former days, were buried in the briers and grass; it was evident that the path had not been used for many a day—perchance years.

After standing for a moment, buried in thought, Paul commenced that journey of two hundred yards, which to him was more terrible than a journey around the entire globe.

As he went onward, tearing his way through the briers, his cheek became paler, until his eyes, increasing in brightness, resembled the eyes of a living man set in the face of a corse. He trembled with cold, although the day was one of the most delicious in June, and gathered his mantle closely over his breast.

He attained the solitary chesnut tree, around which the path turned

with a sudden inclination. Shadowed by the rich foliage, Paul paused for a moment, and remembered that from this tree to the gate of the Block-house, the road was marked by five inclinations. At the first,—counting from the chesnut tree—stood a tulip poplar; at the second, an oak; at the third, a pine; at the fourth, a beech; and at the fifth, a sycamore or buttonwood tree. Around the trunk of each of these trees—distinguished from the other trees by their remarkable size—the path made a sudden turn.

From the foot of the old sycamore, it was but a few yards to the gate of the Block-house. The dense foliage prevented the ancient edifice from being seen, until this point was attained, when it suddenly, and in all its interesting details, rushed upon the eye.

“I cannot go on—every tree, every flower brings some memory before me—I will retrace my steps, and go forth into the world again!”

These words were not spoken in a tone remarkable for depth or power. The accents of the speaker were tremulous and broken, while his chest rose and fell with spasmodic throbbings.

The five trees, which he would have to pass, each tree venerable with age, and clad in the glory of summer, seemed whirling before his eyes:

With trembling footsteps, he left the chesnut tree. Faint and powerless from the emotion, which only added brightness to his eyes, while it paled his cheek, and loosened every fibre of his frame, Paul toiled slowly onward, until he stood beneath the shade of the tulip-poplar.

Then it was, that the memory of the fatal night came upon him with crushing force; he sank on his knees, and buried his face amid the grass.

“With this hand I struck him down—” he moaned—“I dashed him beneath my feet, and lived. Perjured! Perjured! The burden of the Unpardonable Sin is upon me. And yet, that which *has been*, even the guilt of perjury, the crime of an unnatural blow, is innocence compared to that which *is to be*.”

An unbroken silence prevailed through the forest, while Paul remained prostrate, with his face buried in the grass. There was no human eye to look upon his agony, and listen to his incoherent words. He was alone with his Soul—with Memory. Memory of what?

A low humming sound came to his ears. He started up—it was the sound of a human voice. It came gently through the wood, now rising on the air, and again dying away in an indistinct murmur.

“It is the voice of Catharine,” he cried, springing to his feet, and turning around the foot of the wild poplar. “There are two voices—I hear them distinctly. The voice of Catherine and——”

“My father!” he would have said, but could not speak the word.

Trampling over the briars, and through the grass, he hurried onward toward the oak. He was strong in his very despair. He was resolved



to reach the oak without a moment's delay, and turning its rugged trunk, prostrate himself at the feet of his Father. He drew near the old tree, whose branches might have sheltered an hundred men. Venerable with the growth of five centuries, its immense trunk hollowed by decay, and its gnarled limbs woven together with fragrant vines, it broke on the eye of Paul as he hastened forward, just as he had seen it in the summers of his boyhood.

Beneath its shade he paused, and gazed beyond—that sound of voices breaking more distinctly on his ear. Before him, tangled no longer with briers, the road stretched to the west again, with sunlight playing over its grass and flowers, while the bright foliage quivered overhead.

Paul held his breath; the sight which he beheld, enchained every faculty of his soul.

Where the sunshine came in wandering rays, there was a little child tossing merrily on the grass, and crushing leaves and flowers in his tiny hands. A boy with cheeks like the rose, and lips like twin-cherries, hair of bright gold, mingling with the grass, and eyes of laughing blue, turned towards the sky. His face and naked arms were embrowned by the sun, and his coarse garb indicated that he was but a peasant's child. The air rang with his merry laughter, as he tossed his flowers in the air—caught them upon his face and hair, and then—while his cheeks were almost hidden by violets and roses—reached forth his little hands to gather more.

A happy child, dressed in an humble garb, playing all alone in the midst of the silent forest, making the air musical with his voice, and baptizing his stainless cheeks with freshly gathered flowers!

Paul stood very still, afraid to move or breathe, lest he might scare the beautiful vision away. Leaning against the trunk of the great oak, he rested his pale cheek against the rough bark, and gazed in silence upon the laughing child.

His eyes filled with tears.

That picture of laughing innocence stood up beside the image of his own dark fate, in terrible contrast.

—The tears rolled slowly down his cheeks.

—Afraid to breathe, he soon became conscious that there was another spectator of this scene. Amid the foliage, not far from the child, appeared the face of a young woman, with a finger pressed upon the red lip, and the Heaven of a Mother's love lighting up her eyes.

It was the face of an humble laborer's daughter—Paul remembered it well. She was but a girl when he left the Wissahikon. One day, four years ago, near this very spot, a girl of some fifteen years had knelt before him, and joining her hands upon her breast, asked his blessing. The blessing of Paul Ardenheim! Inspired by the superstitious awe which then prevailed among the country folks of Wissahikon, in regard

to the young Dreamer, she sank at his feet and begged a blessing from his lips.

And the face now gazing upon the laughing child, with the finger on the red lip, was the face of the young girl who, four years since, had knelt at the feet of the Monk of Wissahikon.

"They at least are happy! The young mother, whose eyes are full of Heaven, and the child freshly gathered from the blossoms of Paradise!"

It seemed to Paul that he could gaze for ever on this scene; it was to him a picture which memory might wear for ever in her holiest shrine. The child centred amid grass and flowers—the mother gazing from the foliage, her sunburnt face glowing into beauty,—the profound forest all around!

"She can tell me of my father," thought Paul. "At last I can know whether he lives. I long to hear her speak the name of Catharine."

The mother started from the foliage, and stood disclosed in the centre of the hidden road, her young form clad in the coarse attire of a poor man's wife, while her brown hair fell loosely over the kerchief which veiled her bosom.

Paul advanced; his footstep crashing down the wild grass as he left the shadow of the oaken tree.

"It is a beautiful child," he said, in that voice, which was wont to win the ear with its rich intonation—"Let me take it in my arms, and learn from its lips the song which the angels sing in Heaven."

The mother looked up, startled by the unexpected footstep and the voice.

"Do you not remember me?" he said, with an attempt to smile—"Has my face grown strange so soon. I have only been absent two years—"

The young woman gazed upon this form, clad in strange attire, with the mantle floating down the shoulder, and the plume trembling above the dark hair and livid face. She did not speak, but her eyes dilated; her lips parted; she was motionless.

"Do you not know me?"—again that sad attempt at a smile.

The limbs of the young woman bent beneath her; she sank on the grass, and with an involuntary gesture, gathered her child to her bosom. Never for a moment did she turn her wild gaze from the countenance of Paul. The color had vanished from her face; it was evident that she was oppressed by some indefinable terror.

"Do you not remember the day when you knelt before me—near this very spot—and asked my blessing?" cried Paul, as the undeniable fear of the young mother cut him to the soul—"Have I become so changed, so hideous, that you do not know me?"

"Do not harm me—" faltered the affrighted mother, gathering her child closer to her heart—"The dead—the dead—"

"Tell me, does my father live? Catharine—my sister—you have seen her—she is well?"

—"The dead should never return to earth, but to bless us ! Do not—do not harm me !"

"The dead—what mean you ? I am living—"

But still the young mother clutched her child to her bosom, and with her dilating eyes fixed upon the face of Paul, faltered, in a tone pitiful with terror—

"Do not harm me ! Do not harm me !"

—The agony of the damned rent the heart of the Wanderer, as he rushed past the mother and her child. Never for an instant looking back, he fled from their presence, he passed the pine, and ere he was aware, reached the foot of the beechen tree.

From this point the road extended toward the north ; had it not been for the branches, which bent down until their leaves swept the grass, Paul could have seen the Block-house.

"I am accursed in the sight of God and man. Yes, the meanest wretch who digs to save himself from starvation, looks on me with loathing. The young mother shrinks from me, as if there was death in my look ; the very babe upon her bosom lifts its little hands to curse me."

Upon the smooth rind of the giant-beech, some unknown hand had carved a name and date.

#### PAUL — JANUARY FIRST, 1775.

He gazed upon this inscription with a vacant wonder. He could not trust his sight, but passing his hand over the smooth surface of the beechen trunk, felt every letter, and counted them one by one.

"What hand has dared record that date, and stamp the memory of my crime upon this tree ?"

There was no answer to the question. Paul left the shadow of the beech and staggered onward. His steps were wild and unsteady—he tottered like a drunken man.

"It is only a moment longer,—only a moment ! I will stand beneath the sycamore and see my home. Home !"



## CHAPTER NINTH.

## HOME.

A BRANCH bent over his path—he dashed it aside, and caught a gleam of the white trunk of the sycamore.

His face like the face of a corpse, his eyes flashing with the glare of madness from the compressed brows, his forehead damp with moisture, he dashed onward, reaching forth his hands with an involuntary impulse, as he saw the white bark of the well-remembered sycamore.

But ten paces intervened between him and the tree ; only ten paces, and yet every foot of the green sod seemed lengthened into a league.

Bounding forward with the last impulse of his strength, he fell prostrate at the foot of the sycamore. He was afraid to raise his head—afraid to look, lest he might see his father's face—afraid to listen, lest he might hear his father's voice. \* \* \*

Lifting his face from his hands, he gazed down the path, hedged in by trees, and beheld the sunlight shining warmly over a green space in which it terminated.

From that green space arose a wall of logs, and beyond that wall, a massive structure glowed brightly in the sun.

It was the Block-House—it was his Home.

Do not picture to yourself a Gothic mansion, with pointed windows and roof broken into regular peaks, adorned with fantastic carvings along the eaves, with chimneys starting into the air like minarets from the dome of a Turkish mosque—a Gothic mansion, standing in the centre of a garden, which, in its turn, is separated from the woods by a neat lattice fence.

No! The Block-House of the Wissahikon, which we have seen in winter, capped with snow, was only a huge square of logs, rising darkly in the centre of an open space, separated from the woods by a high wall, pierced by a gateway on the west. Whether the Block-House was two or three stories high, whether it comprised twenty or an hundred chambers within its walls of oak and cedar, or whether it was built in imitation of any known style of architecture, are questions that we cannot determine.

In winter time, it turned to the rays of the setting sun, a gloomy front, broken by a lofty hall door, with a window on either side and two above. From this hall door to the gateway was only twenty yards. And in the winter time, this huge square of logs, standing within its wall, with its gateway looking to the west, and its encircling trees stripped of their leaves, rising giant and grim around it, presented an appearance full of gloom and desolation.

But now the scene was changed.

It was surmounted by lofty trees, whose straight trunks rose for thirty feet without a branch, and then their limbs, thick with foliage, met around the roof.

The sun shone warmly over the gateway, over the wall, and upon the fabric itself, but did not disclose the outline of a single rugged timber.

It looked not like a mass of dark logs, but was, in truth, a mass of leaves and flowers. It was covered, from the roof to the sod, with vines, whose foliage only permitted the hall door to be seen. A garment of leaves upon the broken roof; a tapestry of leaves upon the western and southern walls; leaves and flowers, woven together, around the posts of the gloomy doorway—thus attired, the old Block-House looked cheerful in the rays of the summer day.

Even the wall which encircled the space in which it stood, was covered with vines and flowers. The gate posts of cedar were clad in green, in crimson, in scarlet, in azure and gold.

Standing thus, amid its encircling trees, the Monastery no longer resembled a gloomy mausoleum. It did indeed look like a monument built over the ashes of the dead, but it was a monument clad in the leaves, the flowers—the rainbow drapery of June.

Paul could not repress an ejaculation of joy.

“It looks so beautiful—more beautiful than in the olden time!”

Olden time! He had seen scarce twenty-one summers, and yet he talks of the olden time! There are some minds, we must remember, which do not measure years by the succession of winter and summer, but by their Thoughts—by their Suffering—by their Hope and by their Despair.

The stillness which dwelt around the Monastery, was only disturbed by the murmuring of the breeze among the foliage. The subdued light which invested its walls, came through the canopy of woven branches, but no glimpse of blue sky was to be seen.

Paul hurried forward. It was no time for thought. He was determined to meet the pale face of his father—he was nerved to encounter the sad welcome of his sister's eyes.

Leaving the sycamore, he hurried toward the gateway. The gate was open, but wild grass and flowers started thickly between its vine-clad posts. The doors, formed of solid oak, hung on their rusted hinges.

“It has not been closed for many a day,” thought Paul, as he hurried through the tall grass.

He beheld the door of the Monastery—a dark mass of oaken panels, with an iron knocker near the top—appearing in the midst of the tapestry of vines, which fluttered over the front of the edifice.

To leave the gateway, to hurry over the space between it and the mansion—a space overgrown with grass and briers—to place his feet upon the flat stone in front of the door—was the work of a moment.

He nerved his arm as for a desperate effort—he seized the iron knocker and beat the panel with repeated blows, and stood cold and shuddering, as he listened for the echo of a footstep.

He heard the echoes of the knocker die away along the corridor, within the mansion, and—was it a fancy?—he heard the sound of voices; voices very faint and far away. Then a dead silence ensued.

Again—torn by emotions beyond the power of words to describe or analyze—again he lifted the knocker, and again the gloomy echoes resounded through the corridor. And once more that sound, which resembled voices mingling in low whispers, followed by a dead silence.

Paul could endure this horrible suspense no longer.

“Another moment, and I am mad,” he cried, and dashed his clenched hand against the door.

It opened before him—the wooden latch, crumbled by age, fell in fragments at his feet—the light of day streamed in upon the corridor, while a gust of damp chill air rushed in his face.

This corridor traversed the entire extent of the Block-House, from west to east, dividing the rooms which stood upon the lower floor of the mansion.

Into that corridor opened the doors of various chambers—the room of his father—of Catharine—his own cell—the room in which the Deliverer had uttered his vow—and that apartment, which concealed in its bosom the Urn enshrining the Deliverer’s name.

There too was the fatal door traced with the figure of a Cross; the door of the Sealed Chamber.

Paul stood on the threshold, gazing into the gloom of the corridor, listening intently for a sound. From a nook near the door the old clock glared in the sun, covered with cobwebs and dust. The hands stood still on its face; one pointing to the hour of “Five,” the other to the figure “Two.”

“Ten minutes past five!” exclaimed the Wanderer—“It struck five the moment when I left that fatal room—and since that hour has ceased to move!”

It seemed to him that every dumb object which he saw, was armed with some fearful memory. The inscription on the beech—the hands of the clock standing still, and pointing to the hour, the moment, when he dashed his father from his path,—the silent records of the past, looked like the work of no human hand.

“Father! Sister!” cried Paul, but he started at the sound of his own voice.—

Advancing, he opened the first door to the right, crossed its threshold, stumbled against some object in the darkness, and at last touched the bolt of a shutter with his extended hands. He drew the bolt, pushed open the shutter, as far as the vines without would admit, and by the faint light which came through the aperture examined the details of the place.



It was a square room, neatly panelled with dark oak. Near the window was a fire-place, and in the centre stood a large table of unpainted pine, around which were ranged three chairs made of dark wood. Huge rafters stretched along the ceiling, and there were two windows, one opening to the north, the other to the west. As the light came through the narrow aperture, the place looked naked and desolate.

Around this table, in the days bygone, the old man and his children had gathered to their frugal meal; which was prepared upon the hearth, either by the hands of Catharine, or the wife of some neighboring farmer. A frugal meal, indeed, for it was composed of the produce of the garden, the fruits of the field, with clear cold water from the well. Neither flesh nor wine ever passed the lips of the old man or his children.

Paul could not turn his eyes away from the table; the chairs seemed arranged for his father, himself, and Catherine, as in other days; but there was dust upon the board, and cobwebs hung across the fireless hearth.

He could not banish the conviction, that the room had been untenanted for many months.

"He is dead—my father," he cried, in a tone of agony. "I return to my home, and the old place is silent. No voice but mine awakes the echoes. No foot but mine brushes the dust from the floor. Father—sister—both dead—I am alone in the world—alone."

Sinking on a chair, he rested his arms upon the table, and buried his face in his hands.

When he raised his face into the light, every feature was resplendent with joy.

"Thank God—my father is dead! The iron hand of Fate is lifted from my breast!"

Uttering these words with a burst of unfeigned rapture, he sank on his knees, near the table, and raised his glowing face toward heaven.

"The sod is on his breast, the grave-cloth on his limbs—thank God, thank God! There is no stain upon this hand!"

It was his right hand which he lifted in the light.

Mad and incomprehensible triumph! Even amid the tears which fall for the death of his father and his sister, he thanks God that the father is indeed dead, that the sod is upon his breast and the grave-cloth on his limbs.

His face, at all times remarkable for its thought, embodied in features of bronze, and lighted by eyes of dazzling lustre, now shone in every line with an extravagant joy.

"The Fiend who pursued me over the ocean—over Europe—never for one moment pausing in his terrible chase—now hovering near me like a shadow, now descending upon me like a cloud, now drinking my life-blood, drop by drop, from the fountains of my heart—this Fiend shall pursue me no longer! God of mercy—I am free!"

Amid these wild words and incoherent figures, it was plainly to be seen, some thought of appalling intensity was hidden.

“Free to begin my life, as I would have begun it, had I not entered the Sealed Chamber—” he shuddered—“until my father was dead.”

His chest shook as he bowed his head and wept aloud.

“But he may live—live to blast me with the sight of his pale face and mild blue eyes.”

He arose and advanced to the fireplace. There was a shelf above the hearth, and on this shelf Paul discovered, with much astonishment, a box filled with tinder, and near it flint, steel, and a package of matches; in fact, the requisite materials for creating fire. Covered with dust and cobwebs, they had not been used for many a day; it may be, not even since the last night of 1774.

From the ashes of the fireless hearth, Paul drew forth a pine-knot slightly charred at one end.

“It will serve me for a torch, while I traverse the unknown chambers of my home,” he said; and in a few moments, with the red light of the pine-knot flashing over his features, he stood in the corridor again, his back to the sunlight and his face toward the shadow.

Then, as if nerving himself for a desperate deed, he passed along the corridor, he drew near the door of his father’s chamber.

How the memories of other days came crowding over his soul!

Not a board in the floor, nor a panel in the walls, but was remembered by him, and remembered well. The very echo of his footsteps brought back the sounds of other days.

Soon the pine-knot, burning and glaring over his head, flashed upon the door of his father’s room. The moisture started in big drops from the forehead of the son; he felt his heart contract and dilate by turns.

“He may be there, waiting for me.” The thought chilled his blood, as he stood in front of the door.

He listened—standing perfectly still, while the torch lighted up his face with a gloomy ray, he listened for the sound of his father’s voice, for the first echo of his father’s step.

All was still.

And yet, torn by a horrible doubt, Paul could not advance; he remained gazing upon the panels of the door with an absent stare.

He had but to extend his hand, to touch the latch, and the door would open before him. But he dared not do it.

“He is there—slumbering upon his bed, while the Sad Image scowls upon his withered face and venerable hair. In his dreams he murmurs the name of the outcast; in his dreams he writhes at the memory of the sacrilegious blow; in his dreams he repeats the story of the broken oath, and heaps a father’s curse upon the head of the guilty son.”

Paul could gaze upon the door no longer. He advanced but a step,

holding the light above his head. It was the door of his sister's chamber which met his gaze.

"Catharine!" he whispered. There was no answer.

"My sister!" he bent his head against the panels. In that moment of suspense, a gentle face, whose clear blue eyes revealed a guiltless soul, rose vividly upon his memory, over the mists of the past. Still no answer greeted him; there was no footstep tripping lightly over the floor; no gentle hand touched the latch; no voice—full of melody, hallowed with the tones of other days—murmured the brother's name, and bade the wanderer welcome home.

The deep stillness was undisturbed even by the faintest sound.

"Sister!" cried a voice, whose accents were choked with agony—"It is I—it is your brother, who, sick with wandering, maddened by remorse, now stands trembling at the threshold of your chamber, afraid to look upon the innocence of your face, afraid to speak your name. Catharine! Catharine! You do not answer me. You avoid the sight of the blasphemer's face. It is well. I have deserved this, and more."

Again he bent his head and listened. No step, no voice, not the faintest sound.

Paul passed on.

It was the door of the chamber which shrouded within its shadows the name of the Deliverer. The name written by the Deliverer himself, and by the old man deposited in the Urn.

"It was not to be opened until a year had passed. The year has gone, —two years and more—but I dare not cross the threshold, for I am accursed of God, disowned by the dead, abhorred by the living!"

He longed, earnestly longed to cross that threshold, and place his hand within the Urn, and read the words which his Father had written beside the Deliverer's name.

But his heart was too full of fearful memories, his brain was dizzy and his sight was dim. He advanced with trembling steps, and as the pine-knot flashed through the shadows, he beheld the Cross upon the dark panels.

It was the door of the Sealed Chamber.

Paul saw it and rushed forward with a bound. That Cross traced on the panels pierced his brain with an intolerable torture. For a moment he stood before it, swaying to and fro, like a drunken man; he reached forth his hand, and touched the key which was inserted in the lock.

He was about to enter the Sealed Chamber, and confront his Fate once more.

"It was here that I came forth with the blight upon my soul, the mark of Cain upon my forehead. From that hour I have never for a moment known even the name of Peace. From that hour my soul has been given



to the fiend, my life to a despair more hopeless than that which awaits the damned."

His hand was upon the key—he grasped the torch more firmly, and placed his foot against the door.

"Shall I again stand face to face with Fate, and wrap myself in the tempest of my Destiny once more! Again—again—"

His blood congealed as the memory of that incredible Revelation possessed his soul. There was no hue of life upon his face; lip, brow and cheek—all were colorless. His eyes no longer shone with unnatural brightness—they were covered with a glassy film.

And then, as if the secret of that fatal Chamber had taken bodily form, and glowed before him like a corse, invested with an unnatural light by the touch of Satan, with the pale light of the grave glimmering from its sunken eyes, and a low-toned voice speaking from its livid lips—Paul groaned in agony, and muttered amid his incoherent cries—

"Spare me! Spare me! Mercy—mercy! Not with this hand—not with this hand—"

Exhausted by the violence of his emotions,—appalled by the memory of the Revelation—afraid to know that the old man his father was indeed dead, but much more afraid to look upon his living face, Paul sank on his knees, and lifted the torch above his face with his clasped hands.

"There is no pity for me on earth,—in Heaven nothing but Judgment. *My punishment is greater than I can bear!*"

These words, uttered by Cain, when the burden of his remorse pressed too heavily upon his soul, fell with touching emphasis from the lips of Paul Ardenheim.

Many moments passed while he remained on his knees, with his face turned to heaven.

Gathering strength at last, he rose, and turned his eyes toward the opposite door. It led into his own room, the home of his thought, that dearly remembered place, where the Hebrew volume had spoken its mysterious words, and Shakspeare and Milton blessed the Dreamer's soul.

"Shall I enter?" exclaimed Paul, as the brighter memories for a moment banished the gloom from his soul.

"Here the Prophet Shakspeare first spoke to me; here the voice of the Prophet Milton first broke upon my solitude; it was here, within this narrow cell, that I first beheld that World of other ages, which men call the Bible.—I cannot enter now—I am afraid. I cannot pause for a moment, until I know that my father lives, or that he is dead."

He passed on toward the extremity of the corridor. Those doors on either side, which had never been opened within his memory, were now hung with cobwebs. Their dusky surface only spoke of silence and desolation.

Presently the pine-knot flashed upon the last door, at the eastern end of the passage. It was slightly open; Paul touched it, and beheld a narrow stairway.

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## CHAPTER TENTH.

### THE SECRET OF THE UPPER ROOMS.

"It leads to the upper rooms, of which my father spoke in his last letter," said Paul, and for an instant he stood hesitating, with his foot upon the first step. The stillness which prevailed, sank upon his soul, and filled him with an insurmountable awe. At the other end of the corridor, the sunlight shone, but around him all was vague and shadowy. The light of the blazing pine-knot revealed his colorless features, while its smoke hung in a cloud above his dark hair.

A wild hope, mingled with a wilder fear, crossed his brain, that his father stood waiting for him at the head of the stairway, with Catharine by his side.

"Father!" he whispered, and bent forward, trembling in anticipation of an answer—"Catharine!"

It seemed to him, that he heard a sound something like the faint echo of a step, mingled with the accents of a whispering voice. Now it came from the rooms above; he heard it plainly; and again it seemed to murmur beneath his feet.

Was it indeed the sound of a human voice, the echo of a human step, or only one of those peculiar murmurs, which break through the stillness of a deserted mansion, on a calm summer day, reminding us of the low-toned whispering voices—the half-heard footsteps—of the dead?

Paul dared not speak the fear which chilled his heart. Assured that his father was waiting for him at the head of the stairway, that the gentle face of his sister was there, beside the withered features of the old man, he nerved himself for a last effort. His face became calm; not a lineament stirred. It was very pale, but fixed as marble. His hand was firm; he clutched the blazing pine-knot without a tremor.

"If he lives, I am once more an outcast upon the face of the earth. If he is dead—then, there is a hope for me, a glorious hope."

As this thought crossed his mind, he ascended the stairway—his light

flashing upward, with the smoke rolling about the flame like gloomy incense over a demon fire, illumined the head of the stairway.

It was a narrow staircase, winding with a sudden turn, and almost perpendicular. Pale and breathless, Paul attained the head; he stood on the floor of a corridor, and holding the light above his head, endeavored to pierce the shadows which darkened beyond him.

"My father is not here," he murmured, and traversed the corridor.

It was only half the extent of the passage on the lower floor. Seven doors appeared in its walls; three on the right, as many on the left, and one at its western extremity.

Paul anxiously surveyed the doors on the left.

"They have not been opened for years," he said, as he saw the dust which had gathered in the crevices; the spider-webs which hung from the top of each door-frame.

Then turning in his walk, he marked with an eager glance, the doors on his left.

"An inscription—hah! It is dim with time, but the letters are perceptible," and he held the torch nearer to the dark panels.

A name was written there, not in the round Roman, but in the picturesque Teutonic character:

"ANSELM—"

"An—I remember. He was one of the three who, with my father, kept the ancient faith in the woods of Wissahikon."

The next door also bore a name—

"JOSEPH—"

Paul passed on, until he fronted the last door of the three, and beheld traced in the same bold characters, obscured by age, the name—

"IMMANUEL."

"Hah! There is a key in this lock. Shall I enter?"

He turned the key, which grated harshly in the lock, and the door opened. He crossed the threshold, and by the torch-light beheld a small apartment, which contained a table, a chair and a bench—all of unpainted oak.

"Within this rude place, Immanuel passed his hours, meditating, in silence and in night, the coming of the Deliverer. Bread and water placed upon this table, formed his fare. This hard bench was his only bed. Here he lived and died."

The room looked bare and desolate; a strip of parchment affixed to the wall by a nail, alone varied the sombre hue of the dark wainscot. These words were written upon the parchment—

## UNION.

THEN SHALL THE LEAD BECOME GOLD, AND THE SNEER BE CHANGED  
INTO A SMILE.



"Was this inscription, traced upon the parchment, ever intended to meet my eye? Ah—I remember! 'Then shall the Lead become Gold—' my father often told the Legend of the Leaden Image. Another door! It leads into the cell of Joseph—"

There was a narrow doorway opening into the next room, but the door had been removed from the hinges, and the threshold was free.

Paul passed into the room.

The same table, bench and chair, the same blank and desolate appearance, and a parchment affixed to the walls by a rusted nail. Had it not been for the inscription on the parchment, Paul would not have been able to distinguish this cell from the other. This was the inscription—

### F R E E D O M.

*The HEART reveals only when the HAND is boldly grasped.*

"Does this also refer to the Leaden Image? What revelation lies hidden in this cabalistic formula? 'The *Heart* reveals only when the *Hand* is boldly grasped!'"

There was another doorway leading into the next chamber, which presented the same features as the others—the table, the bench, the chair, and the parchment affixed to the walls. It was the cell of Anselm. Thus read the inscription—

### B R O T H E R H O O D.

AT THE FEET OF THE IMPRISONED *thou wilt discover the D——.*

"The last word is obscure—the D is plain, but the other letters I cannot read. Doom? Is that the word? Or Danger?"

Paul sank into the chair of Anselm, and surrendered himself to the train of thought, created by these words written on the parchment, which were affixed to the walls of the three chambers.

"First, Union; then Freedom; and last and best, Brotherhood. First, the assurance that the Lead shall become Gold, and the Sneer be turned into a Smile. Then the dim enigma—the Heart reveals only when the Hand is firmly grasped. Last of all, the mysterious sentence, with its final word blotted by time.—At the feet of the Imprisoned, thou wilt discover the D——. What mean these parchments, affixed to the panels of the lonely chambers, whose very atmosphere is heavy and damp as with the atmosphere of Death?"

Once more Paul traversed the cells, and read again the inscriptions of each place, while his amazement deepened fast into awe.

"Was this designed as a part of my initiation into the higher mysteries of the ancient faith? Ah, I remember—"

Standing on the threshold of Immanuel's cell, he repeated these words, in a voice of indescribable melancholy—

“‘No child shall ever call thee Father! Thy name, thy race must end with thee, and be buried in thy grave.’”

As he uttered these words, he raised his eyes, and by the light of the pine-knot, discovered the door which stood in the western extremity of the passage. Where did this door lead? As Paul stood wondering whether it led into a larger chamber than the others, or opened upon a stairway, his eye encountered the keyhole, and at the same time he felt the key of Immanuel's chamber press his hand.

“I will try it.” He placed the key in the lock; it turned; the door slowly opened.

It was with a feeling of indescribable amazement that Paul started back from the threshold, as the glare of the pine-knot dimly revealed to him the outlines of that unknown chamber.

“A large room, with a ceiling like a dome,” he murmured, as he crossed the threshold—“The windows are closed like the windows of the other rooms; the atmosphere is damp and heavy. How the echoes swell around me, like the voices of ghosts—the shadows flitting over the floor, seem like the phantoms who watch me, as I draw near the moment of my Fate.”

Presently standing in the centre of that spacious room, which occupied at least one-half the extent of the upper floor of the Block-House, Paul raised the light and observed the details of the place.

It was a wide and gloomy hall, with panelled walls and naked floor. There were no chairs, no benches, no paintings on the walls, no decoration of any kind. As Paul advanced, he beheld a circular table standing near the western wall, and standing alone on the bare floor.

He held the light near it; there was a wooden bowl upon its surface and near this bowl a book with the leaves spread open.

“It is the Bowl of the Sacrament, resting upon the altar of the ancient faith, with the open Bible near it.”

He raised the pine-knot; from the gloomy wall above the altar smiled a picture of surpassing beauty.

The design was very simple—a Globe surmounted by a Cross. The sun was rising on the verge of the globe, and its first beams tinted the lonely cross with rosy light.

“‘THE ROSY CROSS!’” ejaculated Paul, in the tone of a man who repeats the words of another. “Ah—I remember—”

## CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

## THE CHAMBER OF THE URN.

PAUL was wrapt in a chaos of thought.

"I will hasten to the room which enshrouds the urn,—there, I will behold the explanation of these mysteries. At last I will read the name of the Deliverer."

He hurried from the Chapel, passed along the corridor and descended the stairs, while the uplifted pine-knot revealed his pale face, marked with the indications of absorbing thought.

He thought no longer of the Sealed Chamber and its Revelation; the memory of his father, his sister, passed from his soul for a moment. As he hurried onward toward the Chamber of the Urn, his meditations, vague and incoherent, became centred in one desire.

"I will read the Deliverer's name. Then the darkness will be day; the mystery will be mystery no longer. It may be, that the terrible suffering through which I have passed, is only an ordeal intended to prepare me for a glorious future."

He reached the door of the Chamber of the Urn. There was no key in the lock, but Paul placed his foot against the panel, and gathering all his strength for the effort, forced it open. The broken lock clanged on the floor as he crossed the threshold.

Paul gazed upon the room; it looked just as it had looked on the last night of 1774.

There was the altar standing in the centre of the place, with the White Urn upon its surface.

"Even now I see him—my father—as he stood beside that altar, and placed his hand within the Urn—"

Paul placed his hand within the urn, and drew forth a letter stamped with his father's seal, and bearing, in the tremulous characters of his father's handwriting, his own name—'PAUL ARDENHEIM!'

Paul broke the seal. Within the letter was enclosed another letter, also sealed and endorsed with the name of Paul Ardenheim. It fell back into the Urn, as Paul held the open letter to the light, and read these words in his father's hand—

After midnight, January 1st, 1775.

My Son—

Within an hour I will exact from you a Promise and an Oath. The Promise—you are not to enter this chamber, nor place your hand within this Urn, until a year has passed.



The Oath—you will not enter the chamber whose panel bears the sign of the Cross, until I am dead, under peril of a father's curse and the guilt of the Unpardonable Sin.

Before you look upon the name of the Deliverer, you will be made acquainted with the Secret of the Sealed Chamber, which involves your Destiny and mine.

Within a year I will be dead. At the hour of my death, you will enter the Sealed Chamber; one year from to-day you will enter the Chamber of the Urn. Thus you can obey your promise, your oath, and at the same time learn within a year, the Secret of the Sealed Chamber and the Name of the Deliverer.

That brief year rolls away—it is the appointed hour. \* \* \* It is the first of January, 1776. \* \* \*

You have broken the seal—the letter which contains the narrow strip of paper, on which the Deliverer wrote his name, is in your hand.

At this moment, my son, I charge thee—Remember the vow which thou didst take upon thy soul, when thou wert initiated into the brotherhood of the R. C., on the night of the first of January, 1775.

Remember the words written in the Chambers of the Brothers, Anselm, Joseph, Immanuel.

Has the Lead indeed become Gold with thee, and hath the Sneer in truth been changed into a Smile? Hast thou forced the Heart to reveal by boldly grasping the Hand?

Hast thou discovered at the feet of the Imprisoned, the D—

Hast thou, in a word, learned the truth embodied in these enigmas, and seen Union lead to Freedom, and Freedom end in Brotherhood?

Hast thou, in the Chapel of the R. C., beheld the Altar, the Bowl, and the Book, and been nerved by their memories for the great task which awaits thee?

Then thou art indeed prepared to read the name of the Deliverer; but not until these mysteries are to thy soul as the sunlight is to thine eyes, shalt thou break the seal which conceals that name.

YOUR FATHER.

It will be remembered, that the old man, on the Last Night of 1774, bade Paul prepare for a solemn ceremony, which was to take place at sunset on the next day.

This ceremony, it will be seen by the preceding letter, comprised not only a Vow of Celibacy, but an initiation into a secret Order, designated above as the Brotherhood of the R. C.

This letter, written after midnight, on the first of January, 1775, by the Father of Paul, anticipates the initiation and the vow, and regards them as having already taken place.

It will also be perceived, that the old man intended the letter to apply to the first of January, 1776.

## CHAPTER TWELFTH.

THE HEART REVEALS ONLY WHEN THE HAND IS BOLDLY GRASPED.

"I have no right to break the seal. For these mysteries are all wrapt in impenetrable gloom. The Lead has not become Gold, nor has the Sneer been changed into a Smile. I have not forced the Heart to reveal by boldly grasping the Hand. At the feet of the Imprisoned I have not discovered the Doom; or—is it Danger?"

Paul dwelt with a painful intensity upon these cabalistic sentences.

"Ah, fatal, fatal night, when I dared to violate my oath, and rush uncalled into the presence of my fate!"

Strange it was that no word of reproach passed his lips in regard to the beautiful woman who had urged him to his ruin, on that fatal night! Not a word of reproach, nor yet of memory. Since he crossed the threshold of the Block-House, an hour ago, he had not spoken her name.

Placing his hand within the Urn, he drew forth the sealed letter which concealed the name of the Deliverer.

"One movement of my finger, and it is broken; but no—no! I am not worthy—"

He gazed upon it with an earnest eye and dropped it back into the Urn.

"Hah! a light breaks on me—" he murmured, and hastened from the room without closing the door behind him.

He did not stay his footsteps until he stood in front of the door which opened into his father's room. Not an instant did he hesitate. The door opened at his touch, and by the torch-light he beheld that chamber, where, on the last night of 1774, he had seen the leaden Image scowling over the sleeping face of his father.

Paul advanced; he beheld the couch—it was vacant; he raised his eyes, and with a shudder, saw that leaden face, smiling in the red rays, as with a preternatural scorn.

Still, in the recess, at the head of the couch, stood the Image of the "Imprisoned Soul," with its form attired in the rude garments of a toiling man, its hand extended, and that sublimity of sadness stamped upon its sombre face.

"*He* is not here," cried Paul, with an accent of unfeigned joy—"Ah! The coverlet yet bears the impress of his form. 'Tis as he left it on the fatal night."

He did not pause to think. To pause at a moment like this, was to become a raving maniac. He seized the extended hand of the Image, and

pressed it firmly, at the same time looking steadily into its sad and motionless eyes.

Had his hand touched some secret spring? A square space in the breast of the Image opened like a door—a packet fell at the feet of Paul—and the breast of the Image closed again.

Paul seized the packet; it was a scroll of manuscript, written in the German tongue, with a few words in English on an outside leaf:

—“*To be read by my Son, after he has entered the Sealed Chamber and the Chamber of the Urn.*”

These words were written in a bold round hand, and beneath appeared other words, in a hand that was tremulous with age or disease.

“Paul, you have often heard me relate the Legend of the Leaden Image. It is more intimately connected with your Destiny than you may imagine. After you have entered the Sealed Chamber, and the Chamber of the Urn, and before you have broken the seal which hides the name of the Deliverer, read the history of the Leaden Image, written in the German tongue by Brother Anselm. *Do not wonder if this history is widely different from that which you have often heard from me.* You are now prepared for all the truth; read. And even amid the sarcasm which sometimes mars the narrative of Brother Anselm, learn the history of the Image, which now gazes sadly upon your face. You have seen ‘that the HEART reveals only when the HAND is boldly grasped.’ It is now your destiny to learn, how the Lead will become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile. At the feet of the Imprisoned you will discover the D——.”

“Again that word is blotted and dim! Is it Doom or is it Danger?”

Paul seized the manuscript of Brother Anselm, and still holding the torch in his hand, hurried from the room. He was afraid to read it there, for his father’s face seemed to start from the shadows, as he looked upon the bed, yet bearing the impress of a venerable form, the memory of the sacrilegious blow came terribly to his soul.

“In the free air, by the light of the summer sun, I will read these pages—” he cried; and soon stood on the threshold of the Block-House, with the sunshine upon his face.

He seated himself upon an old bench, half-concealed by the grass, which started up thickly in the space before the Block-House door.

The hour was invested with a peculiar solemnity. The summer wind rustling softly among the forest leaves, gave a lulling music to the scene. Belts of golden sunshine, belts of tremulous shadow, flitted by turns over the grass, the flowers, over the form of Paul and the Block-House clad in vines.

“It is yet two hours until sunset,” exclaimed Paul, as he gazed upon the manuscript and absently glanced over its pages. “I will have time to read,—to know at last the reality of my fate—ere the moment of my meeting Reginald arrives. Hah!” he cried, arrested by a word which seemed



to separate itself from a page of the manuscript, and force its meaning on his soul—"Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross!"

Let us look upon those mysterious pages, which seemed to open to his eyes the secrets of the other world. Let us translate the bold German into English as rude and bold.

This was the Manuscript which Paul Ardenheim read, on that summer day in June, as he sat upon the bench, half-concealed by the grass, which started up thickly around the Block-House door.

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## CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BRODER ARDEN.

#### I. THE SACRAMENT OF THE POOR.

"A WOODEN cup, filled with water, emblematic, not of blood, but of tears—a loaf of coarse bread, such as is now the food of serf and slave, such as was once the food of Jesus \* \* \* Behold the Sacrament of the Poor!"

These words were spoken many hundred years ago, in a wide and lofty temple.

There was no sunlight there. Torches held aloft by the arms of stalwart men, gave a red light to the place of prayer. It was a Cathedral; but no human hand had raised its arch. Almighty God was the Architect.

The torchlight glared upon the roof of the cavern, and disclosed the forms of four thousand kneeling worshippers. Beneath that gloomy arch, while the deathly stillness of the cavern brooded all around, they knelt; afar from the light of the summer sun, afar from the dismal battle-fields which blackened the valleys of Bohemia, afar from the world, the church, the stern faces of the monarch and the priest.

In the centre of the cavern, an old man, whose rude garment and snow-white hair gave him an appearance at once venerable and apostolic, stood erect, his feet placed upon a rock, which rose from the stone floor, like an altar from the floor of a church.

Around this rock stood four men, whose foreheads bore the marks of much toil—the scars of battle and the stolid apathy of sullen endurance—and in their right hands they raised the blazing pine-knots above their heads. They wore swords at their sides.

"My brothers—" said the old man, and he beheld the old men and the

brown-haired youth who knelt upon the cavern floor—"My sisters—" and he gazed upon the women, the daughters of the poor, who, coarsely attired, yet with a rude, wild beauty in their sunburnt faces, had come to the recesses of the earth, so that they might freely worship God. "My children—" the gray eye of the aged man, glancing far through the cavern, whose expansive roof glowed redly with the torch-light, beheld the bowed heads of four thousand men and women. A death-like stillness reigned. Only the tremulous voice of that old man, and the murmuring of an earth-hidden stream were heard.

"My brothers, my sisters, my children: we have come here to spend an hour with God. Many battles have been fought: our native land has grown rich in graves. Still there is no peace for us on the face of the earth. Banished from Church and Cathedral—hurled like savage beasts from the light of the sun, this place at least is free. In this temple, not made with hands, but shapen by Jehovah, we can commune for an hour with our Father. Around this communion altar of our Lord, we can forget all that is dark and evil in the world, and only remember that we all are brothers and sisters, and that the good God is our Father."

He paused for an instant, while his withered hand was laid upon his coarse garment.

"Let us partake of the Sacrament of our Lord Jesus together, and with one heart, my children!

"There is no golden goblet here, to scare the poor man from the table of the Lord—no costly wine, to make him feel ashamed of his poverty. \* \* \* A wooden cup, filled with water, emblematic, not of blood, but of the tears of Christ—a loaf of coarse bread, such as is now the food of serf and slave, such as was once the food of Jesus \* \* \* Behold the Sacrament of the Poor."

On a rock which rose before him, a huge wooden bowl was placed. It was filled to the brim with clear cold water. Beside it lay a loaf of coarse bread; such bread as the poor have watered with their tears, and crimsoned with their blood, since the hour when "It is finished!" quivered from the lips of a God-like face, that smiled over the multitude of Calvary.

"It is not for us," the aged man exclaimed—"not for us to drink the blood of Christ. We can only tell him our anguish, and drink his tears."

This wooden bowl, filled only with water, this loaf of coarse bread,—the black bread of serfdom and manacled labor—was the Sacrament which the four thousand hunted outcasts were about to share together.

The heads of the multitude were raised; kneeling on the cavern floor, they saw the rock, the bowl and the bread; while, standing out from the blackness, the figure of that solitary old man shone in the torchlight.

"One is absent from our feast—" the old man said. And from tongues innumerable trembled the name of the absent one, and prayers were uttered

ferently, and hearts spoke earnestly to God, at the mention of the absent Brother.

“John Huss!”—the gloomy cavern echoed with the name.

“He has gone to Constance; gone to meet the vassals of Anti-Christ; gone alone, to assert, in the faces of Kings, that Faith which the Lord Jesus delivered many hundred years ago to his People, the Poor. And all the chains, and scourges, and swords of the Priest and the King have not been able to rend that faith from the hearts of the poor, through the long night of ages. We hold it still, and to us it says—as it will say for ever to our children—that great multitude who are born only to toil and die!—‘The Lord Jesus was a son of toil, and he is the only Redeemer of the Poor.’”

The old man’s voice was no longer weak and tremulous. It gathered strength as his eye brightened into new life. His tones, strong with almost preternatural vigor, awoke the echoes of the dismal cavern. Not an ear but heard his words, not a heart but throbbed quicker at their sound.

“My brothers, my sisters, ere we share the Communion of our Lord, let us pray for the absent one!”

All was still as the old man knelt upon the rock. Every murmur was hushed, but the hands of the people were clasped with great earnestness, and their faces were stamped with a silent anguish.

It was a solemn sight to see that outcast old man, whose hairs had grown gray in damnable heresy, kneeling alone upon the rock, while four thousand outcast men and women knelt around him, and his lips uttered an earnest though blasphemous prayer for the absent outcast—for John Huss, the wretched Heretic, who had gone to Constance, to tell consecrated Priests that their golden garments were stained with the blood of the Poor; to confront anointed Kings with the blasphemous assertion—“Ye are guilty in the sight of God. Your thrones are built upon the skulls of the human race; even amid the sunshine of your royal sway, I see the darkening cloud of Almighty anger.”

After the prayer was said—every word echoed by the throb of four thousand hearts—the old man rose, and the four men who held their torches near him, placed a veiled figure by his side. They lifted it from the cavern floor, and raised it with a sturdy impulse upon the rock. It may have been a living being, or only a dumb thing of metal or of stone,—perchance a skeleton, which once was a soul—but no eye might behold its outlines, for a veil of sackcloth covered it from head to foot.

Much wonder was there in the earth-hidden vault, as, with uplifted faces, the kneeling people beheld the sackcloth which enshrouded the unknown figure. Murmurs echoed from lip to lip, until the broad arch above flung back their accumulated emphasis, with a sound like thunder.

The old man placed his hands upon the veiled figure—every withered line of his face was stirred by emotion.



"In a few moments your eyes shall behold it. Yet, ere we mingle around the Altar of the Sacrament, let me repeat to you all a strange history, which my fathers told to me when I was but a little child. After the history is told, I will lift the veil, and you shall behold——"

He glanced toward the shrouded thing, and while every heart throbbed with anxiety to hear his words, he uttered the history which old men had told to him.

Shall we, for a little while, leave this gloomy cavern, and go back from the age of John Huss into other and more distant ages?

Shall we dare to tell the incredible history of that shrouded thing, which, covered with sackcloth, stood on the rock by the old man's side?

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## CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BRODER HUSLM.

#### II. THE LEGEND OF THE TENTH CENTURY.

A CAPTIVE, rising from the straw which littered the floor of his cell, inscribed on the dingy wall, these figures—

3651.

Through the only window of the cell—narrow and high, it opened to the east, permitting a glimpse of earth and sky to be seen—came the soft warmth of a declining summer day. That mild glow disclosed the bare walls, the high arch, the miserable straw, which littered one corner of the cell. It was in truth a desolate place, and the ray of sunlight only made it seem more black and gloomy.

As the Captive rose, it might be seen that his form resembled a skeleton, endued by a supernatural hand with something like life, and clad in coarse attire, with thin flakes of gray hair falling about his bony forehead and hollow cheeks. He walked very slowly along the floor, lifting his large eyes—which all the while seemed like lighted coals placed in the orbits of a skull—toward the light, and bared his fleshless arm.

Then, with a sharpened nail, he pierced a shrunken vein, and with his blood, traced on the wall of the cell the figures—**3651.**—

But first, he effaced from the wall certain figures inscribed in dim red characters—**3650.**—

And while, with the point of the rusted nail, moistened by his blood, he performed this singular work, like a man influenced by a solemn vow, the sunlight shone as if in mockery upon his skeleton form, and played right cheerily with his bony forehead, and large brilliant eyes.

The Captive stood with folded arms, surveying in silence the figures he had written with his blood. It was as though some harrowing memory was associated with those red characters, for not for a single moment did his gaze wander, or the expression of his features change.

The light began to fade, and the shadows, which had assumed various fantastic forms, gathered in one vague mass around the solitary captive.

There came suddenly through the thick walls a low, deep sound, which awoke the imprisoned wretch from his reverie. Now it seemed like distant music, now like a chorus of dying groans, now like the accumulated whispers of an affrighted, panic-stricken crowd. It was only the organ of a chapel, thundering its deep tones through the arches, as the evening hour brought on the darkness.

Not far from the Captive's cell, that Chapel disclosed its Image of the Virgin to the last kiss of day ; indeed, the Chapel and the cell were combined in the same edifice, a Monastery, whose dark spires and turrets rose against the fresh verdure of a beautiful valley.

The Captive heard the sound of the organ, mingled with the chaunting of the evening hymn, and bent his head lower upon his breast, raising his eyes all the while from beneath his compressed brows, to gaze upon the red figures—**3651.**

In the Chapel of the Monastery, that organ spoke out with a deep voice of music and religion, and the vesper hymn pealing from the lip of Monk and Nun, awoke in every heart a living hope of immortal joy.

But, to the Captive shut out from all the world, withered by hopeless imprisonment—blood, and heart, and brain stricken with the palsy of despair—that evening mass, echoing through the thick walls, had a singular message.

It did not say to his leaden ear—"Look up, child of God, the sun is setting over hill and valley, but there is Hope for you in the night, and glory in the cloud !"

To *him* it spoke with a far different voice. As he bent his head, and by the fading light beheld the mysterious figures traced in his blood, growing dim and dimmer every moment, the solemn Mass, chaunted by Monk and Nun, deepened by the thunder-tone of the organ, uttered a sad message :—It said—

"You were young. Your step was firm. Your eye bright. Your heart full of life ; and your brain as wide and free in its thought as the blue sky of heaven. Now you are old, miserably old ; you tremble on the floor of your cell, an unburied corse. Once a father blessed you as you crossed the cottage threshold—once a Mother pressed her hands upon your head,

and blessed you, as the Hope which God had given to her old age. Once a girl, beautiful even in her homely peasant garb, placed her hand in yours, and promised to be your wife. Now look from yonder window, and behold the blackened walls of your ruined home. Look beyond those walls, and see the graves of the old man, your father, and the peasant woman, your mother. Your betrothed? Seek for her in the living grave—in the tomb, like unto that which encoffins yourself—in the Convent cell, a pale, withered form, shrouded in the white robe of a nun!"

This was the message of the vesper hymn to the soul of the solitary Captive. For ten years it had spoken to him in this cell, every day its message pealing sadder, darker, and more like the accents of hopeless despair.

To me, the image of that solitary Captive, shut out from the world, in the Tenth Century, confined while living in this hopeless imprisonment of a Bohemian Monastery, his death-lighted eyes fixed upon the figures, traced on the damp wall with his blood, presents an image of superhuman despair.

He could see the blasted roof-tree of his home from the window, behold the sunset smiling upon the graves of his peasant people—he felt that his betrothed peasant wife, transformed into a nun—"a living corse," as the old books have it—was near him, only separated by a solitary wall. And yet he did not gaze from the window, nor listen for the voice of his peasant wife. Roused from his straw, by the impulse of a stern and sullen duty, he had inscribed those mysterious figures on the wall, and stood gazing upon them with his large sad eyes.

The Crime of this wretch? Wherefore swept away from humanity and its hopes, into the life-in-death of this cell? Wherefore trace with his blood upon the wall, the figures 3651, after first erasing 3650.

We dare not give his crime—have not the language to penetrate the mystery of those crimson numerals.

Night deepened over the scene, and by the starlight his figure was dimly revealed, still standing with his face to the wall, as though through the darkness he sought to read the inexplicable inscription.

There was a sound of jarring bolts—the tread of footsteps in the passage—and the door of the cell, rolling on its hinges, gave passage to a flood of joyous light. Still the captive did not turn; the warm light, streaming over his shoulders, revealed the inscription, and for the first time, in a low voice, he spoke—

"Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one," he said, and was silent.

And all the while, a brave company of monks clad in satin and velvet, warriors glittering in steel and gold, came thronging through the doorway of the cell, their fine attire flashing and glancing in the strong radiance.

And the gay band—for even the monks, with faces round and oily, seemed joyous in the plenteousness of flesh and soft apparel—two figures



were prominent. One was a Monk, the Abbot of the Monastery; the other a Knight, the Lord of the broad lands, extending from the domains of the Monastery, to far-distant forests.

There was no care upon the Abbot's face. Corpulent and complacent, he seemed defended from all thought by his soft, silken gown; and on his rotund form, he bore a shining cross of gold, hanging to his apoplectic neck by a golden chain. Above the vivid redness of his cheeks, above his small eyes, almost hidden in laughing wrinkles, some scattered white hairs gleamed, like scanty snow-flakes trembling on the verge of a red-hot furnace. He was a corpulent man and a righteous withal—ah! had you but seen his complacent smile ripple upward over his unctuous cheeks!

As he beheld the captive, a look of compassion seemed struggling into life from the fulness of his face.

The Warrior by his side. A gaunt form, cased in armor of steel, with a gold drop sparkling here and there, and a huge sword—it was two-handed—hanging from his left shoulder to his feet. A bunch of white plumes waved over his steel helmet, and beneath its raised vizor appeared his face. The features coarse and bold, the eyebrows thick and gray, the eyes fierce and penetrating, the wide mouth and large jaw full of the Iron Will of an Iron Soul.

Even his face gleamed with something like pity as his sharp eyes rested upon the solitary captive, who, with his back turned toward the brilliant company, gazed steadily upon the wall.

As for the Monks and the Soldiers, who, treading at the heels of the Abbot and the Lord, came thronging over the threshold,—the torches smoking and flaring over their heads—they watched the faces of their masters for a moment, and then took courage to gather something like pity into their eyes.

The Abbot spoke. It would have done you good to hear him. So soft, so bland his tone, gliding from his lips smooth as olive oil over a burnished platter.

“Wretch!” he said.

It was kindly meant, no doubt, but the captive did not answer. It may be that he did not hear the soft word. For ten years no human being had spoken to him one word of kindness, and it was plainly to be seen, that his ears were sealed to any thing like the sound of a human voice.

The Lord in the terrible armor, with the potent sword hanging at his shoulder, now essayed his power. He was eloquent—

“Heretic!” he said, and laid his hand, gloved in steel, upon the living skeleton.

The miserable criminal turned slowly, and looked with his large eyes at the face of the stern Knight and the rotund Abbot.

“Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one—” this was all the captive

said, and his sunken cheeks were flushed by the torch-light, his eyes, unnaturally bright at all times, were touched with a mocking glare.

"Michael—" the Abbot placed a hand glittering with rings upon the criminal's tattered garment—"Do you repent of your hideous crime? Do you renounce the power of Lucifer?"

The prisoner, folding his big hands over his sackcloth, looked vacantly in the face of the Abbot. It was a pitiful contrast. That dumb Image of Famine, with idiocy glaring from the large eyeballs, and this rotund embodiment of corpulence, glowing all over with complacency and holiness. Here a skeleton covered with sackcloth—There an Ideal of Flesh, enshrined in satin, with such a gay golden cross, moving to the slow pulsations of a little heart. Indeed, it was a miserable contrast.

"I will try him, reverend Father—" said the Knight, glancing grimly over his servitors, all clad in armor, terrible with club of iron and sword of steel—"Michael, would you like a little sunlight, a little free air? Dost hear me? Would you like to feel your foot upon the mountain sod, and draw a good long breath of freedom, ere you die?"

Something like intelligence began to beam in the big eyes of the wretched man.

"Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one," he said in a shrill voice, slightly raising his joined hands.

We are afraid that this contrast is not one whit less pitiful than the first. Here a living skeleton, slightly lifting his bony hands, while something like reason begins to beam in the dumb anguish of his face—there a splendid warrior, glowing in golden helmet and snowy plumes, terrible with steel armor and two-handed sword.

"Noble Lord, let me speak to him—" and the good Abbot, wearing on his breast a golden Cross, which was supposed to remind him of the Wooden Cross on which a long-suffering Being died some hundred years ago, spoke blandly to the Idiot—

"Mary!" he said.

At once the dawning intelligence brightened into day. The Idiot's vacant eye burned with sudden fire. There came slowly over his death's-head face a glow, that lighted up the sunken features, and made him look like a living man.

"Mary!" he echoed, and then relapsing into his vacant mood again, murmured with a sad smile—"Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one."

It was remarkable; he ever laid a peculiar emphasis on the word, one.

"Wretch! There is no hope!" the Abbot benevolently said, and turned away.

The Monks, as though answering to some solemn litany, chorused—

"Wretch! There is no hope!"

But the grim Knight, whose features bore the stern impress of fifty

years of blood, looked in the Idiot's face with a glance that seemed something like compassion.

"I will rouse him—" he roughly said, and then laying a hand upon the arm of the captive, began in his abrupt, impetuous way—"Michael, I say, Michael, dost thou remember me, my boy?"

The Idiot's face was vacant.

"Thou wert once a page in the hall of my castle, Michael. A braver youth I never saw. Light in step, courtly in speech, thine eye bright and thy form like a vigorous sapling. Dost remember the old castle, Michael? Thou wert a peasant lad, the son of a serf, and yet my father took thee to be his page. Took thee, when but a baby on thy peasant mother's knee. And dressed thee in soft apparel, and taught thee knightly duty—God's blood—" the knight swore a knightly oath—"Canst thou not call it to mind?"

Still the big eyes of the Idiot glared vacantly upon him. No touch of humanity there! A skeleton with fire-coals shining from the orbits of his eyes—nothing but a skeleton, clad in sackcloth and placed on his feet by a supernatural power.

"Idiot! He cannot remember—no more sense than a rotten piece of wood!"

Here the soldiers, true to their duty, repeated their lord's ejaculation, looking into his stern face all the while.

"I will touch him gently—" whispered the excellent Abbot, advancing from the throng—"Dost thou remember me? Thou wert wont to come oftentime, from the Castle to the Monastery, dressed like a gay page, Michael—many and many a time. And an aged Brother of our order taught thee to read, to write, Michael, and permitted thee to read the books of our library, my good child—"

His good child! So withered in his sackcloth, with the gray hairs hanging over his skull-like face—a very strange kind of child, I trow.

"Dost thou remember me, Michael?"

But the Idiot's eyes were vacant still.

"And then, Michael, in thy journeys from the Castle to the Monastery," resumed the Abbot—"and from the Monastery to the Castle back again, thou didst chance upon a peasant girl, wondrous fair, and pleasant to look upon. Thou didst exchange vows of love with her, with Mary, Michael—with Mary, I say—Mary—"

How the sudden reason looked out again from the Idiot's great glittering eyeballs!

"Mary!" he echoed—"Mary!" and he raised his bony hand to his forehead, and seemed wrapt in thought. He removed it in a moment; his face was pitiful and vacant again; slowly down his hollow cheek rolled a single tear.



The grim Lord bade the soldier by his side to turn his torch away, for said he, with a lordly curse—"The light hurts mine eyes!"

But the corpulent Abbot, determined to restore the wretch to something like reason, went on in his pleasant voice—

"But then, Michael, loved as thou wert by all within Castle and Monastery, pledged in vows of betrothal to this peasant maid, thou didst at once dash thy best hopes into dust, by a hideous crime. Thou didst—blessed saints be merciful to me, for I can scarce gather strength to speak it!—violate all laws, human and divine, and crimson thy soul with the guilt of unpardonable sin. 'Tis ten years since we endeavored to preserve thy soul from utter ruin, by a little needful and blessed severity. We separated thee and thy peasant bride. We consigned thee to the silence and seclusion of this cell; first forcing upon thee the solemn vow of our order. And as thy father and mother, Michael, participated in thy guilt, we made a blessed example from their ashes—"

"I remember the day when they were burned—" suggested the Knight.

"Mary, my page—" he looked into Michael's vacant face—"was forced to take the veil in the convent *after*—"

He paused suddenly. At the word "*after*," the Idiot's eyes again flashed with a sudden consciousness; his lips moved. His long knotted fingers were clenched with a violent gesture.

"After?" What did it mean, that word which died half-uttered on the tongue of the noble Lord? Perchance some allusion to an illustrious custom of the ancient days, which gave to the Lord of broad lands unlimited control over *the life and person of any serf who might chance to be born upon those lands.*

"Thou didst, Michael, commit the unpardonable crime," the good Abbot continued, crossing his hands upon his robust body—"Dost thou repent of it, now?"

The Idiot's eyes were blank as white parchment.

"Didst not, Michael,—I speak, my good child, for the good of thy soul—go into the hot fields, where the serfs were at their toil, and tell them, that the good God would one day give to them—the hewers and the diggers—the land on which they spent their sweat and blood? Didst thou not dare to take the Bible from our Monastery, and tell the serfs such damnable falsehood as this, and also assert, that it was written on the holy page?"

The Monks groaned in horror—the soldiers joined in chorus.

"Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one," murmured the Idiot.

"Didst thou not stand by the wayside, and tell the gaping serfs, that the Church was a Lie, built up in stone and plaster; and the Castle a Blasphemy, cemented in blood; and that both Church and Castle stood upon foundations of human skulls? That Monk and Lord were combined in an unholy league, whose motto was evermore,— '*Shame to the*

*Carpenter's Son, and death to his brothers and sisters, the Poor.*'—It makes my blood run cold to speak it!"

"Thou didst call the Lord Jesus a Carpenter's Son—" cried the awe-stricken Knight. "Thou didst. With my own ears I heard thee!"

In answer to these terrible accusations, the Idiot-captive said never an intelligent word; only unclosing his shrivelled lips to murmur, "Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one!"

"And then, Michael—poor boy—grown bold in crime, as the serfs followed thee in crowds to the mountain side, and listened to thy ravings all day long, thou didst even spread the Bible before their unlearned eyes, and utter a heresy too damnable for repetition. Yet I will repeat it, in order to impress upon thy soul the full enormity of thy crime. '*The day comes,*' thus thou didst speak—'*when there shall be nor Priest, nor Lord, nor Castle, nor Church. Then shall the earth become a garden, and all men be brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of the Poor.*'"

The Monks and the soldiers started back with one impulse of horror, leaving the corpulent Abbot in his satin, and the Knight in his armor, alone with the blasphemous wretch.

"But I came upon thy serfs and thee, with my good riders—" the Knight said, benevolently. "It was at night, and ye were standing on the mountain side. We came upon your band of Rebels and Heretics, with club and sword. Only one was spared.—Michael, thou wert the only one out of some fourscore. We spared thee—"

"In mercy!" smiled the Abbot, smoothing the creases in his robe with his fat hands—"In compassion."

The Idiot-Captive raised his arm, withered as a branch of dead pine, and marked with innumerable minute scars.

"Three thousand six hundred and fifty-one," he muttered, turning his large eyes from face to face.

"What means he by those idle words, which he repeats so often?" and the good Abbot turned his round face toward his dear children, the Monks.

A Monk with thin sharp features gave answer—

"It has been my office to bring bread and water to *him*," he said, pointing to the captive Blasphemer—"And I have noticed every day a different number writ on the wall, in blood-red letters. Yesterday, 'twas—I marked it well,—three, six, five and a nought. To-day, 'tis three, six, five and one. 'Tis writ with a sharp nail, and a little blood from his arm."

"Strange! passing strange—" ejaculated the good Abbot—"What can the Idiot mean!"

"Days!" exclaimed the captive, in a shrill tone, whose maniac boldness startled every spectator. "Days!"

And with his long bony fingers he pointed to the blood-red figures on the dingy wall.

At once a light dawned on the Abbot's soul.

"Holy Apostles! The heretic means to say that he has been imprisoned just three thousand six hundred and fifty-one days. Malignant even in his madness! He has written it upon the wall, with his blood—"

Extending his hand, the reverend Abbot pointed to the wall, while his round visage, glowing with a godly fervor, was turned toward the stern countenance of the Land-Lord by his side.

There was a pause of breathless stillness.

"To write the number of days with his blood!" gasped the Abbot.

It seemed a thoroughly blasphemous thing, in the eyes of the reverend man.

"But we must not forget our purpose," suggested the Knight—"I have the gold, and it may as well be turned to account for the good of my soul."

"'Tis a holy impulse my son, which guides thy actions. In a battle with a Lord whose estate is next thine own, thou didst sack his castle, put his people to the sword, and take his daughter for thy leman. Thou wouldst make friends with Heaven and St. Peter, by giving unto our Monastery a goodly store of gold. Is it thus, brave Knight?"

"Even so. I would have the gold transformed into an Image of the Blessed Saviour, which shall stand above the Chapel-Altar, as a token of my pious thought—"

"And as Michael here was somewhat cunning in the arts of painting and sculpture,—that is, before we imprisoned him—it was thy purpose to offer him life and freedom, on condition that he moulded an Image of the Lord from your gold?"

"It was," said the Knight—"But there is no hope. His mind is utterly gone. See! How he clutches at the light!"

Indeed the appearance of the wretch was very pitiful. Fixing his great eyes upon the light, he seemed to behold phantoms, invisible to all other eyes, for his extended hands clutched nervously at the vacant air.

"Michael," said the Abbot—"Let me clasp thy hand. Turn thine eyes upon me. Thou mayst be free. Thou shalt behold thy Mary once more—"

The great eyes, glassy with a vacant stare, shone with soul.

"Mary!" and the miserable man clasped the fat hand of the Abbot, and looked with intelligent earnestness into his face.

Again the Abbot uttered his words of mercy—

"Free, I say! Thou shalt be led forth into the open air and the warm sunshine. Thou shalt behold thy plighted wife—Dost hear me, Michael? Dost repent of thy heresy?"

"Heresy!" echoed the captive, in a mild tone—"I had a wild dream, but it is over now. Do with me what you will, only let me feel my foot upon the mountain side, and inhale one long breath of air—free air, and I will come to my cell again, and die. I promise this, good sirs,—I swear it —I—"



He knelt at their feet, joining his knotted fingers, as he rolled his eyes from face to face.

"He consents," said the Abbot, with a smile—"He will mould for us the GOLDEN IMAGE of the Redeemer!"

Far through the blackness of night glared a vague mass of flame, now looking like a luminous cloud, now like an immense ball of fire. It shone half-way up the mountain side, and was regarded by the serfs of the Bohemian valley with great wonder and awe. Even those who were in the secret, and knew the cause of this light, could not see the glaring through the darkness without a sensation akin to fear.

It was nothing more than the light of a furnace shining from the mouth of a cavern.

Before that cavern, on the rocky ground, men-at-arms, cased in iron, strode to and fro, and within its walls, the captive Michael toiled steadily at his task. They had built him a furnace, supplied him with wax, with clay, with lead, with heaps of gold, and given him the aid of sinewy arms, so that he might mould, even from the intense flame, a glittering Image of the Redeemer.

For many weary days, for countless long and dreary nights, the men-at-arms kept watch in front of the cavern, while the Heretic toiled within. They could see him hurrying to and fro, in the glare of the intolerable flame; his skeleton form and haggard face, touched by the intense light, making him resemble the Demon of some monkish Legend. And the stern soldiers, accustomed to battle, and familiar with blood, trembled at the sight of this miserable wretch, who toiled near the furnace in the mountain cavern.

Sometimes, at dead of night, while his work was in progress, he would come to the mouth of the cavern, and standing thus, between the mountain and the light, gaze silently on the slumbering valley. No one spoke to him. Even the serfs, who aided him in the mere physical portion of his task, shrank from his touch. They beheld him hover round the flame, they saw him shape his model of wax and encase it in a rough coffin of clay, and at his command, piled the fire-wood all about it, until the heat blasted their eyesight. But no one dared to speak to him—He was accursed; he had made a compact with the Fiend—"Heretic!" they whispered, pointing with a stealthy gesture at the skeleton figure near the flame.

At last the statue was done. Word was sent to the Castle and Monastery that the Image of Jesus, moulded of bright and beautiful gold, lay on the cavern floor, amid the embers of the dead fire, enshrined in its shell of baked clay.

It was a morning in the fall of the year, when the serfs and men-at-arms, thronging over the rocks in front of the cavern, saw a gorgeous cavalcade wind slowly up the mountain side. Around extended the woods,

touched by autumn; in the blue dome of heaven, a single mountain peak arose; from afar, on the bank of a winding river, gleamed the turrets of the Monastery, while the gloomy wall of the Castle rose in the east, over the tops of the brown forest trees.

And the cavalcade of Monks and Soldiers wound slowly up the mountain side, with the peal of trumpet alternating with the chaunted hymn, and the glittering steel armor contrasting with the flowing robes of priestly grandeur.

Conspicuous among the band, two forms were seen—the grave Knight and the jocund Abbot. The white plumes of the Lord fluttered over his golden helmet, and the glittering cross which the Abbot wore on his breast, shone from the distance like a star.

And the music came merrily up the mountain side.

Now winding around a cliff, now lost in shadow, the cavalcade drew near and nearer. At last they reached the mouth of the cavern, the Monks in their white robes extending to the right, and the warriors in their burnished armor spreading to the left.

In the centre of this brilliant crescent, stood the Abbot and the Lord, the dark mouth of the cavern yawning before them. They awaited the coming of Michael the Heretic. The fire was extinguished; all was dark within. All was silent as the moment of his approach drew near. Not an eye in all that throng but longed to look upon that beautiful statue. Every heart beat quicker as the echo of footsteps ascended from the cavern.

On the threshold, just where the warm sunlight encountered the midnight of the cavern, appeared a skeleton figure and a wan and withered face. It was Michael, clad in his humble garb, and holding in his knotted fingers a lighted pine-knot. The expression of his face, so hollow in the cheeks, and skull-like in the brow, was mild and subdued; with his eyes cast sadly to the sunlight, he stood on the threshold of the cavern, folding one hand upon his shrunken chest.

“It is done?” exclaimed the Abbot. “You shall be free—you shall behold your plighted wife—”

Michael the Heretic serf did not speak, but bowed his head in mute assent. It was evident that the miserable man was scarce able to maintain his feet. Ten years of imprisonment has withered him from strong and beautiful youth into hopeless and premature old age; the thought and toil of his cavern task, has almost extinguished the last spark of his wretched life.

“Come!” he said to the Abbot and the Lord, and, turning his face from the light, went slowly into the cavern, torch in hand.

With hasty steps the corpulent Abbot followed the ray of his torch; the Knight, lean and muscular, advanced with measured strides.

“It will be a beautiful image, no doubt—” chattered the Abbot, as he picked his way among the loose stones; “for the fellow, though a serf, has some wit—and it will be a mass of gold, solid, heavy, shiny gold,—

'twill be an honor to our Chapel, and fourscore masses shall be said, Sir Knight, when thou art dead—for the repose of thy soul—”

“Rather let them be said without delay, before I die, that I may live a few years more—” growled the pious Lord.

“Behold the Image!” A hollow voice resounded through the cavern, and the Heretic Michael stood motionless, holding the torch above his head. That light, while it left the cavern wrapt in dismal gloom, shone vividly over the features of the Heretic, and revealed the Image of the Redeemer.

It was placed erect upon a rock. The form clad in the garments of a Bohemian Peasant, the hand extended, the brow stamped with a peculiar expression—all shone vividly in the light.

The Abbot and the Knight could not stir; the Image held them motionless, with a sensation of involuntary awe. They did not utter a word, but gazed upon it with fixed eyeballs.

They beheld, not a figure of bright and glittering gold, but an Image of the Saviour moulded in lead, the form grimly arrayed in the costume of serfdom, and the face stamped with a look of unutterable sadness. The large motionless eyeballs, the lips moving in a smile that had more of sorrow than joy for its meaning, the great forehead impressed with a sublime despair—all moulded, not of bright and beautiful gold, but of dull, sullen lead, thrilled the spectators with sensations such as they had never felt before.

It may have been that the sad hue of the lead deepened the impression which the Image produced, but as Michael held his torch near and nearer to it, the thought rushed upon the spectators that they did not merely behold a form of lifeless metal.

“I cannot banish the thought—” gasped the Abbot, as his rubicund cheek assumed the color of a shroud—“No! No! There is a soul imprisoned in that leaden mass! A Soul that watches me now—hears me as I speak, and reads my soul with those fixed eyeballs—ah! Heretic! What have you done? By what infernal sorcery have you imprisoned a living Soul in that Image of lead?”

The Heretic sank on his knees, and a smile broke over his livid face. But as he sank he raised the torch on high, and by the varying light, his face seemed to smile, to frown, to sneer by turns.

The Knight uttered a fierce oath.

“I am afraid!” he cried, leaning upon the hilt of his two-handed sword—“There is a Soul there,—thou’rt right, Sir Abbot—a Soul imprisoned in those fixed eyeballs—”

“What hast done with our gold?” cried the Abbot, turning fiercely upon the kneeling wretch—“Where—” The words died on his chilled lips. For the eyes of the Leaden Image were upon him; they seemed to pierce his heart; the sublime despair of that forehead congealed his blood.



Kneeling on the cavern floor, every nerve trembling with the last throb of life, the Heretic lifted his face toward the light, and his voice was heard, clear and distinct, through the silence of the cavern—

“You asked of me an ‘Image of the Saviour triumphant over Death and Evil, as he appears in your Church.’ I could not mould a Lie into Gold, for I felt that my hour was near. So I moulded HIM of Lead, and moulded HIM—not as he appears in the Bible, the friend of the oppressed, the Redeemer of the Poor—but as He *is* in your Church, a Sullen Spectre, scowling upon the agony and anguish of mankind. Behold him, not pure and beautiful as he shines from the Bible, but as he is—imprisoned in the hollow forms, the blasphemous ritual—of your Church—”

The voice of the dying wretch became faint and fainter; the hand which grasped the torch, quivered over his distorted face—quivered for a moment, ere it fell motionless in death.

“Behold him, not as he walked the sands of Palestine, a free, beautiful Spirit, full of Godlike love for Man, but as he is, chained by the satanic body of your Church—Behold—the Imprisoned Jesus!”

The Abbot and the Lord started back, awed and terror-stricken, from the dying blasphemer.

“And yet the day comes—” he staggered to his feet again, and held the light near the sad, sullen face of the Image,—“And yet the day comes, O Lord, when thy Spirit, no longer imprisoned by creeds, shall walk freely once more into the homes and hearts of Men. Then shall the Lead become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile!”

As he uttered these incomprehensible words, the torch fell from his stiffening fingers, and darkness possessed the cavern, gathering in its folds that sullen Image, which seemed to bear within its leaden bosom a Living Soul.

What had he done with the Gold? Neither the Abbot nor the Lord could ever give answer to this question; for, stricken with terror, they commanded that the cavern’s mouth should be choked with a wall of impenetrable stone, leaving the dead body of the Heretic alone with the blasphemous Image. Here, shrouded by darkness, alone in night, they remained for ages, until the day of Huss, when this cavern became the temple of four thousand worshippers. But a wild tradition hinted, in obscure terms, that within the leaden Image was concealed a bright and beautiful statue of Gold. Was it ever discovered? Did the leaden shell ever fall aside, revealing the face of the Loving Spirit.

## CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

## THE MANUSCRIPT OF BRODER ANSELN.

## III. THE IMAGE.

ONCE more we turn our gaze to the scene which occurred in the days of John Huss—to the aged man who, placing one hand upon a shrouded Image, saw four thousand worshippers prostrate on the floor of a spacious cavern.

“Ye have heard the history,” he exclaimed, glancing afar over the multitude, who had listened to the Legend of the Statue in breathless stillness—“Now behold the Image!”

He flung the sackcloth aside, and suddenly descended from the rock.

Sad and alone, the leaden Image towered there, with the torchlight quivering over its motionless eyeballs and broad forehead. As the light, agitated by the subterranean air, flitted in gusts of radiance over the dusk countenance, it seemed at once to sneer and smile, to frown with sullen anger and brighten into a holy joy.

Every face was raised to look upon it; every tongue was sealed; but the vast crowd moved with an unceasing undulation. At last, from a thousand lips, confused murmurs pealed upon the silence of the vault—

“It is no statue, but a Living Soul. See! The eyes brighten and the lips move! The Lead will become Gold at last, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile!”

These words might be distinguished amid that wildly whispered chorus, and the white-haired man, leaning against the base of the rock, looked up into the leaden face, while something like a radiant hope began to burn in his eyes—

“Lord! Lord! Shall thy pure Soul, no longer imprisoned in creeds, walk freely once more into the homes and hearts of men? Shall all thy people gather around one altar, sharing the bread which is thy body, and the water from the wooden bowl, emblematic of thy tears? Or shall the day come, when the Poor will dare to claim the cup filled with pure wine, symbolical of thy Blood? Shall the Lead indeed become Gold, and the Smile chase the anguish from thy face?”

The light flashed fitfully—the Image seemed to smile; it did smile upon the crowd of Bohemian Poor.

But as their solemn cry of triumph rose to the vaulted roof, a way-worn man rushed through the prostrate crowd, his garments torn, his face covered with roadside dust.

Darting forward, he sprang upon the rock, and his face—marked by the

consciousness of a dread message—was contrasted with the leaden countenance of the Image.

“Brothers, Sisters, People, I come from Prague—” he shouted, with the faint gestures of an exhausted man—“I saw John Huss—expire—amid—the flames—”

He sank exhausted on the rock, and a silence, more eloquent than groans or tears, descended upon the kneeling worshippers.

Soon they arose, and trooping silently around the altar, shared the bread of the Serf with each other, and drank the water from the bowl, in memory of their Lord, who said, many centuries before, that his Mission was to his Brothers and his sisters, the Poor.

And all the while, the leaden Image, glowing faintly in the torchlight, looked upon their Rude Sacrament with eyes of unutterable sadness. Yet even in the sadness—so it seemed as the light flitted to and fro—there seemed mingled a mocking sneer. Was it for the Poor, or for the Oppressor who trod them into dust?

The aged man lifted up his voice—

“It is not yet time !” he cried—“But at last, after the People of the Lord, whose tears and blood have not ceased to flow for five thousand years—at last, after they have suffered enough, and the cup of their anguish is full—the Lead will become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile !”

Has this Legend of the wild Boheman land no meaning for the people of all ages?

Let us seek for the Image amid scenes and men of all ages, that have died since the day of John Huss, and ask an answer to these earnest questions—

Did the Lead ever become Gold? Did the Sneer ever change into a Smile? Did the pure beautiful Spirit ever escape from the leaden form of creed and ritual, and walk freely into the homes and hearts of men, as in the days of Gethsemane and Calvary?

These questions we cannot answer; but a singular tradition prevails—we cannot prove its correctness—that the Leaden Image has appeared on various occasions in the history of the world. It is a tradition, to be sure, and yet there may be embodied, in its wild details, some rude Truth, or perchance the gleam of a rude Truth.

One day a white-haired man was burned to cinders, in the open square of a Protestant city. Ere he died, and while the flames were slowly devouring his flesh, he never ceased to cry, “Jesus, Saviour of sinners, have mercy on me ! Christ, pity me !” And all the while, from a window of a neighboring house, a gaunt man, with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, watched the agonies of the burning wretch, and said, in a low voice, “The Church hath power to put down all heresy by the sword.”



The watcher was called John Calvin, and the wretch whose slow agonies he watched bore the name of Michael Servetus.

And as the cindered bones of Servetus crumbled amid the ashes of the fire—while Calvin took up his Evangelical pen and wrote a Thesis in defence of the Deed—there appeared to the other spectators of the scene, a singular vision of a Leaden Image, standing very near the stake, with a fathomless scorn upon its motionless lip and fixed eyeballs.

It seemed like an Image of Jesus, not the Jesus of the Bible—pure, loving and serene—but the ferocious creation of John Calvin's vindictive soul.

So we might trace the history of the Leaden Image through various scenes and ages. There are persons who maintain, that such an Image never existed, but that a Spectre, something like it, stamped with a sullen grandeur on its dusk forehead, has appeared at certain intervals in the history of the world; appeared as a Warning, an Omen, an Incarnate Scorn.

## CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BRODER HANSEN.

#### IV. THE PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD.

THERE was a night, when a band of earnest men, who believed that God might be adored and man be loved without the medium of church or creed, assembled in the solitudes of a mountain cavern. They were but few in number, and yet it seemed as if all the nations of the earth had sent their representatives to this secret Congress of Brotherhood, this obscure Parliament of Love.

History, or that fabric of falsehood, which is promulgated to the world as history, does not record the names of these men, who formed the little band; and yet, their deliberations went forth from that mountain cavern over all the world, like the voice of a Regenerating Angel.

The fair-haired German was there; and by his side the Spaniard, with his bronzed cheek, and eye of fire. There, the Italian, full of the ancient glory of his land, and the Frenchman, with his story of Protestant and Catholic wars. The Swede, the Dane, the Hungarian, and the Turk,—all were mingled in that band. Even the far land of the New World was

represented there in the person of a Colonist, fresh from the witchcraft murders of New England.

These men, grouping round a rock which started from the cavern floor, talked with each other in low, earnest tones. A single torch, inserted in the crevice of the rock, gave its faint light to the scene, and dimly revealed their various costumes, and the passions as various, which flitted over each face.

Near that rock, a solitary figure towered erect, his face and form concealed by a dark robe.

While all the others conversed in agitated whispers, he alone was silent.

Not a gesture betrayed his emotion, nor indicated that he was in truth any thing but a dumb image of wood or stone.

There was but one in the little band who knew his name.

Wherefore this assemblage in the mountain cavern of Germany, at dead of night, by the faint ray of a solitary torch ?

Wherefore these signs, by which the various persons recognised each other ? and what meant that password in the ancient Hebrew tongue, which echoed round the place until the gloomy arches seemed agitated into voice by the sound ?

It will be remembered, that this meeting took place when the first quarter of the seventeenth century was near its close.

The German, with his fair hair and blue eyes, arose—

“Reformations are in vain for my fatherland. A new Luther must arise and work out a broader and bolder Reformation. The last has but substituted one creed for another—Germany festers with the unburied corpses of those who have been slain in the war of Creeds. The Reformation only agitated the atmosphere in which Kings and Priests swelter into bloated power. It left the Poor where it found them—there, under the hoofs of Priest and King, doomed to dig and die, whether a Pope or a Synod reigns. Earth calls to God for a new Reformation, which shall overlook the world, as with the eye of God himself, and behold in God but the common Father of all mankind ; in nations and races, however divided or styled, but a common family of Brothers.”

As the German took his seat upon a ledge of rock, near the central rock, a murmur of deep emphasis filled the cavern.

Then, one by one, the members of the little band arose, and spoke the thought of their souls freely, and with no fear upon their faces.

The Spaniard rose—

“*In Spain exists the Inquisition—*”

As if these words comprised all that man can know of degradation, all that Priests can inflict, or Kings contrive, in the form of Murder, he said no more.

Next the Frenchman—

"St. Bartholomew's corses have not yet mouldered into dust," he said, and was silent.

After he had ceased, an Irishman arose. He had no word to utter, or perchance his heart was too full for words. He laid upon the rock, in the rays of the light, some leaves of withered shamrock, and a broken harp. The withered leaves and the broken harp were stained with blood.

Without a word, the Irishman glided into the shadows again.

Then the voice of the Englishman was heard—

"Some time ago there was a war in my native land. The People, that vulgar race, whose life is comprised in three words—we are born, we suffer, we die!—The People, I say, came up bravely to that war, and spoke with an ominous murmur to an anointed King, telling him in their rude way, that he was but a man. That, forgetting his Manhood in his Kingship, he had committed murders enough to have hurled a thousand men to the scaffold. Therefore, said the People, King as you are, with the royal blood of twenty generations in your veins, with the anointing oil of all the Priests in the land upon your brow, you must die.

"They put their King to death upon the scaffold, and said in the face of God and Man—'We will have no more to do with Kings. They have had the world long enough for their Murder ground—long enough have they set men at one another's throats, and turned the Image of God into an engine of carnage.' This was a brave thing, which the English People said, but the time was not yet come; they had not yet learned the great lesson of our order. First, Union; then Freedom; and last Brotherhood.

"They could not yet recognise in God, but a loving Father of all mankind, nor in nations and races, but a family of Brothers.

"Therefore, after having put their King to death, and buried the word 'King,' with his headless body, they became the slaves of Faction. They quarreled about creeds and forms, leaving the great fact of all Truth—**BROTHERHOOD AMONG MEN**—a dumb and mangled thing beneath their bloody feet.

"At this time, a bold Son of the People cast his eyes about him, and saw the danger of his brethren. He saw the word 'King' start into life again from the headless body of Charles the First—he saw the People once more kneeling in their blood, under the iron feet of Power.

"He determined to save his race, but, alas!—pity us, good Lord, for we are weak!—he could think of no better way of saving his people from the name of 'King,' than by usurping the Power without the Name.

"Therefore, the Lord delivered him not into the hands of his enemies, but to the remorse of his own soul. Delivered his great heart to the terror of the Assassin's steel—delivered his giant intellect, blinded and bound, like the Samson of old, to that terror which fears a shadow, and trembles at a sound.

"At last he died, and England, forgetful of the blood which had been



shed to achieve her freedom—forgetful even of the greatness of that Brewer, who had made the name of Protector nobler than the name of Emperor—England, I say, forgetful of the brave men who had died, by tens of thousands, to redeem her from the name of King—England rushed to the grave of Charles the First, and took the crown from his fleshless skull, and put it on the head of Charles the Second, and hailed him—‘King!’

“Yes, my brothers, Charles the Second is King in England now, and while he reigns, there is a headless trunk amid the offal of the ditch, there is a bleeding head nailed up to scorn, upon the gate of London. That headless trunk, and that bleeding head, once embodied the Soul of Oliver Cromwell.”

The Englishman could say no more. Charles the Second on the Throne, and Oliver Cromwell’s body cast forth to feed the hunger of dogs, Oliver Cromwell’s head nailed up to the gate of London—it was enough.

The Representatives of the Nations uttered a groan for fallen England.

Then, one by one, these men gathered from the quarters of the globe,—assembled at the mandate of some Invisible Chief, or by the watchword of a universal brotherhood—arose and told, in various ways, in every tongue, the same story.

Kings everywhere, Priests everywhere, and everywhere slaves.

It was a horrible catalogue of enormities, which fell from the lips of these brethren.

Indeed, it seemed as if the World—its men and women, its little children, and its babes unborn—had been given up by some ferocious Destiny into the hands of Superstition and Murder.

The Turk, the Arab, the Hindoo, and the Swede, all told the same story in various forms. In every land a King, and for the People nothing but chains and graves.

There was a black man in the throng; from his voice and manner it appeared that he had received the education of the white race.

The story that the black man told, was of petty Kings, on the soil of Africa, selling the flesh and blood of Africa to eternal bondage in a New World. A bondage that had no parallel in the history of crime, for under the name of Servitude, it comprised Murder, Incest, Blasphemy.

As the word “New World” fell from the black man’s lips, a shudder agitated the throng.

“Slavery in the New World!” cried the German—“Alas! Alas! then God has indeed given the earth into the power of Satan——”

“Do not blaspheme,” said the voice of an aged Swede—“The New World is the last altar of Brotherhood left on the surface of a desolated globe. We have looked to the East for light—it will come from the East;

but it is in the West that the light will reveal to us the perfect image of human brotherhood."

At this word the Representative from the New World arose. Every one was silent; they all gazed upon his rugged features and backwoodsman attire with an absorbing interest.

"The New world is the last altar of human Brotherhood!" he said, echoing the words of the aged Swede—"There was a band of friendless exiles, driven from the shores of England by the lash of persecution. They sought a Home and an Altar in the forests of the New World. They landed one day, on a Rock which they called Plymouth, and the red men of the woods bade the wanderers welcome.—Brothers, this was not many years ago, and yet I stand among you, an exile and an outcast from the New World—"

"An exile and an outcast from the New World!" His words were echoed on every side.

"He has committed some horrible crime—" and the aged Swede shrunk from the side of the Colonist.

"Yes, I am guilty of crime—a horrible crime. I could not believe in my neighbor's creed. I could not think that Murder was any the less Murder, because it was done by grim Priests, in the name of God, and the victims were old men and defenceless women. Yes, yes—I have stood upon the soil of the New World, and seen men given up to the cord and scaffold, because they could not believe in an Orthodox Protestant creed—"

—"Even as I, a Spaniard, have seen them racked and burnt in the Act of Faith of an Inquisition!"

"But I have seen that Image which we love in a Wife, reverence in a Sister, adore in a Mother—I have seen the Image of Woman lashed naked through the streets, amid the jeers and prayers of cadaverous Priests, who saw the blood start from the quivering flesh, and shouted, 'Scorn to the Heretic, Praise to our God.' This on the soil of the New World—this in the land which God hath set apart as the most sacred altar of human Brotherhood!"

Bathed in tears and blushes, the American crouched into a seat. One groan quivered from the hearts of the listeners.

"We all looked to the New World for light, and lo! we have it, but it is the light from the flame of persecution, the red blaze which Bigotry has stolen from the fires of hell."

From the verge of the circle which the brothers formed, as they clustered around the light, a tall form advanced. It was a man clad in a blanket, with a wampum belt wound about his waist; a man of aquiline nose and high cheek-bones, eyes like sparks of flame, and skin that resembled the deep red of autumnal leaves.

"I am an Indian," he said in a guttural tone—"But the language of

your Brotherhood has become my language. The altar at which you worship is also mine. I am an Indian. Twenty winters ago, I dwelt among my people, beside the river which flows from the forest to the sea. Our numbers were as the leaves in the forest, as the sands by the shore. From the wood to the river, extended our wigwams, thick as the birds in the sky, when the sun is low. The White Man came; he was attired in black. There was a Cross upon his breast. He taught my People a new Religion; he built his temple in our midst. The Great Spirit whom we had seen in the sky, we now beheld in a Cross, and worshipped in the form of a Silver Cup. And yet his Religion made the heart warm within us, for it spoke of a Great Being, who had come from the sky, so that he might suffer among men, and die despised and scorned upon a tree, in order that all men might love one another. It was a beautiful Religion, and we loved it. Our warriors knelt at the foot of the Cross—our maidens placed that Cross upon their bosoms, and set it, bound with flowers, amid the folds of their raven hair.—We loved the Religion, and the man in the dark robe who taught us to love it, grew white-haired among us.

“One morning in summer, as we were gathered in the temple near the river shore—as the old man lifted the Cup on high, while our nation knelt at his feet—a bullet pierced his brain. He fell at the foot of the Cross. A red blaze streamed through every window—there was a sound like an hundred thunder-claps in the air. There were an hundred dead bodies on the floor of the temple.

“The grass without the temple was burdened with the dead—the river, near us, grew red with blood on every wave.

“From the rocks on the opposite shore, streamed one incessant sheet of flame.

“Evening came at last. The sun was setting. I was the only living man, and I stood alone amid the harvest of death.”

A cry of horror pervaded the cavern.

“Who was it that did this deed? Who were the murderers—the savages of other tribes, your foes among the red men?”

“They were white men who did this deed. They believed in the same Being whom the man in the dark robe taught us to love.”

“Wherefore this murder?” asked the Swede.

These white men, who came upon us as we knelt in prayer, and shot us down, and stabbed us, as we rose upon the river’s wave, and pierced our skulls as we crept into the bushes—these white men believed in the same Cross in which the old man believed, but—” a sad smile stole over the red features of the Indian—“they only believed in the Cross as it was written in a Book—while the old man believed in it as it was carved in wood or sculptured in stone. Therefore they murdered us.”

There was a pause of stillness, unbroken by a sound.



"Brothers," cried the Indian, "I come to you in the name of the Red Men. We melt away before the white race like snow before the flame. They kill us with the sword, they poison us with fire-water, they sweep us away with the plague. Help, or we are dead."

The appeal of the Red Man touched every heart.

An Italian, with every line of his animated countenance stamped by thought and endurance, next arose.

"Italy," he exclaimed, "is palsied by a Nightmare, which crouches upon her breast, and slowly drinks the blood from her heart. The Nightmare changes its form every instant—now it is a Priest, now it is a King; now the Priest and King, combined in one, realize the idea of an Incarnate Devil. Help for Italy, ere the last drop of her blood is spent!"

Then by the side of the Italian appeared the dark figure of a Jesuit. Every eye shuddered to behold him there—all wondered why he had dared intrude upon this band of brothers—not a man but shrunk away from him, afraid of the very folds of his dark robe.

"Help for the Catholic Church," he exclaimed—"Help, Brothers of Love, for that Church which once overspread the earth, and sheltered all men under the wings of her Divine Unity! She now lies bleeding in the hands of Princes who call themselves Priests, of Murderers who call themselves Pastors!"

The smile that had agitated every face when he commenced, died away in a look of sympathy as his last words fell on their ears. They extended their hands; they encircled him.

"There is hope for man, when the Jesuit invokes the aid of Brotherhood in behalf of the Church!"

And all the while, that solitary figure stood veiled,—speechless and motionless—near the rock, alone amid the throng.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BROTHA ANSEM.

#### THE ROSY CROSS.

ONLY one in the secret band knew his name and history. The time now came for that man to speak.

He came from the shadows, and stood disclosed in the light, his tall form, arrayed in the gray garb of a peasant, standing distinctly into view. His

features were darkened by exposure to the wind and sun; his large brow projected over eyes which shone steadily with an unchanging lustre. Those eyes shone into every heart, and all the brethren in the cavern felt that a Great Soul was embodied in their light.

This man, in the coarse peasant garb, leaned one hand—cramped and knotted by toil—upon the shoulder of the veiled form. In a voice harsh and abrupt, he began to speak.

He spoke of a Secret Order extending over all the earth, and dating its origin back to that dim time, when history becomes a fable, and chronology a shadow. Of the rites, symbols and customs of the Order—which spoke to the heart through the eye, and formed a universal language, intelligible to brothers of every race and clime. Of the most sacred sign of the Order, which was written on the pyramids of Egypt, and the Monuments of Mexico, and stamped upon the dumb stone and mortar of past ages, in every quarter of the globe—the most sacred sign, a Cross placed upon a globe, and lighted by the rays of a rising sun, and therefore called the red or Rosy Cross.

This Cross, placed upon a dark globe, with the dawn breaking over its darkness, was the emblem of the great purpose of the Order,—the regeneration of the millions of mankind, by three great ideas, Union, Freedom, Brotherhood.

The Globe was a symbol of Union; the Light, breaking upon it from the darkness, an emblem of Freedom. The Cross, standing above upon the globe, and blushing into radiance in the fast coming light, was a type of BROTHERHOOD.

This Order was known among men,—known only in vague supposition and unaccredited tradition—as the BROTHERHOOD OF THE ROSY CROSS.

As the brother in the peasant garb went on, his harsh voice became melodious, his manner, no longer hesitating, grew firm and bold. He traced the history of the Brotherhood from the far gone ages, down to the present time. In language vivid and eloquent, he pictured the elaborate ceremonial, the giant organization, the fascinating mystery, which characterized the Order, and made its power felt over all the world, in all time, like the hand of a God.

“And yet, with all this Power—these symbols, that form a common language for Brothers of all nations, these rites, that elevate with their beauty and bewilder with their mystery—with all this power, felt through all ages, over all the world, like the hand of a God, behold the degradation of mankind. In vain our labors, in vain the labors of our fathers. In vain this tremendous organization, in vain the universal language, the rites, the symbols—all in vain. Man still bleeds under the feet of Priest and King—the world is still given up to Satan. Even that holiest name, which we have written upon our banner, embalmed in our hearts, consecrated with the baptism of our tears—even ‘BROTHERHOOD’ has fallen prostrate, afraid

of the darkness which broods over the earth, trampled into dust by the iron feet of Evil."

These words thrilled through the cavern, and a breathless stillness fell upon every tongue. Faces, wet with tears, that glittered in the dim light, attested the truth, the power of the speaker's words.

Still resting his knotted hand upon the shoulder of the unknown, the peasant in the gray garb continued :

"But the contest is not yet over. 'BROTHERHOOD' is clouded by mists of blood-red smoke, but it is Divine, it is Eternal, it will live when the stars have faded from the sky. For it is of God, and therefore cannot die.

"But we must embody the idea of 'Brotherhood' not only in rites and symbols, but in such a form that the meanest of earth's trodden children may behold it and love it.

"Do you hear me, my brethren ?

"This idea of Brotherhood, nay, this Eternal Fact, this deathless manifestation of God, must be embodied in a form, that will speak to the hearts of men, and through their hearts regenerate the world."

"Do this," cried the Swede, "and Kings and Priests exist no longer."

Every face was lifted in earnest hope to the visage of the speaker, and a murmur filled the cavern, a murmur swelled by many tongues, but with only one meaning.

"Let the Divine Truth of Brotherhood be embodied in a form that will speak at once to the hearts of men, and our work is done. Man will indeed be free; there will exist no longer on the face of the globe, either a Lord or a Slave, to blaspheme, by their existence, the goodness of our FATHER."

"But how shall the idea be embodied? In what form shall we personify the holy Truth?"

"Listen, my brothers, and I will tell you. We will embody this idea in the history of some individual life, whose every word shall melt the souls of men into tenderness and love. Shall we take the life of some great Philosopher,—some of those weird sages of the ancient time, who surveyed the world from the casement of their cell, and reasoned boldly upon Man, but could not feel for him? Shall we summon Pythagoras,—or Plato—or even that bravest and most manful of them all—Socrates? Ah, I see the smile steal over your faces—I hear your murmurs, What have Philosophers to do with the millions of mankind? Have they suffered, any moment of their lives, that stern Martyrdom which is ever the lot of the Poor Man, from his birth to his death—the martyrdom of Poverty, that has no couch for its tired head, but in the grave; the martyrdom of Toil, that is without a Hope in this world or the next. Have these Philosophers drunk of the poor man's cup; have they wept with him in his desolate home; have they measured his anguish, or sounded the depths of his immeasurable Despair?"



"Away then with Philosophers. Cold reasoners, shrouding themselves in the mountain cloud of sophistry; they never descend to the plain, and feel with the millions who are only born to be trampled and to die.

"The world does not demand abstractions. It calls, even from the kennel of its degradation, it calls for some great Heart, to feel for its despair, and win it tenderly into light and love once more.

"Shall we embody this Idea of Brotherhood in the life of some Priest, or tell the world how lovely it looks, how wonderful and sublime in the life of some King? As well embody the Idea of Heaven in the image of a Satyr, or personify the angel-tenderness of childhood in the dusk countenance of Satan!

"No—away with Priests and Kings,—away with all like these, who *do not live in the same world* with the millions of mankind.

"But we will give this idea shape, color, voice. We will embody the principle of Brotherhood in the life of a Mechanic."

His words were followed by a breathless stillness; and then the murmur rose—"Where will you find a Mechanic, who has risen from the hut of the poor man into the light of fame?"

"In the life of a worker, toiling with the workers of the human race, a Son of the Poor, living and dying for the Poor. Listen, my brothers, and do not treat with scorn my crude Legend of other days. But I will tell to you the story of the Mechanic whom you seek, the son of the Poor whom you desire.

"One day,—in the ages long ago—the Son of a Carpenter looked out from the window of his father's workshop, and beheld his brothers and sisters, the Poor, trodden down under the gathered infamies of four thousand years. His garments were very rude; clad like a child of the People, he wiped the laborer's sweat from his brow, and from that workshop window, he cast his eyes over a world in darkness and in chains. A fire that was of God suddenly lighted up his eyes; that forehead, damp with the sweat of toil, became radiant with a Thought. His lips unclosed, and he uttered the travail of his soul in these brief words—'Over all the earth, one sound swells up to God. It is the groan of the Poor man, who has no joy in this world, and no hope in the next.'

"Then, as if a voice from God had penetrated his soul, the Son of the Carpenter laid aside the tools of his father's craft, and, clad as he was, in the coarse garb of labor, yet with a Thought shining over his brow, went forth into the world, and said to the Poor, as he met them on the highway, or saw them bending under the hot sun, in the rich man's fields, or beheld their wan faces from the windows of the prison, 'Brother! There is a God in heaven; he is our Father! He marks the sparrow's fall—think you, then, that He looks unheedingly upon the anguish of his children, the Poor, who bear his image, and have every one of them a ray of his Eternity in their hearts?'

"Such words as these, thrilling from the lips of a Carpenter's Son, stirred the hearts of the Poor. They followed the young man by thousands; now by the lake shore, now on the slope of the mountain side, now in the desert woods, he talked to them, as much with his radiant forehead and calm deep eyes, as with his voice; and he always ended his teachings with a word like this—'*God is our Father, and all men are his children.*'"

"I might spend the hours of this silent night, in telling you how this Son of the Carpenter dwelt with the Poor—shared the crust of the Poor—wept with the Poor—lived for the Poor, and died for the Poor. As for the Rich Man, whether he appeared in the form of a Priest or as a King, the Son of the Carpenter only spoke of him with pity, with reproach, with scorn. His mission was to the Poor. And without arms, without Priests, clad only in his humble garb, he spoke to the Poor of his native land, and his voice moved the earth like the pulsations of the Heart of God.

"He died—at last, after a brief mission of three years—he died; I need not tell you how!

"What death is reserved for those who endeavor with a single heart to do good to Man? Not the death of the pampered Priest, who, reclining on silken couches—embosomed in the chambers of a Palace—looks, with sorrow too deep for tears, upon the rich viands and the genial wines, which he cannot take with him to the grave. Not the death of the Conqueror, who makes himself a couch of the bodies of the slain, and expires most royally—a tiger clad in glossy fur, crouching upon his victims and tearing them with his fangs, as he dies.

"No! But the death of the Felon, nailed to an abhorred tree, which towered alone and hideous, upon the height of a craggy steep, with the black sky above it, and the dark mass of countless spectators around and beneath it.

"This was the death of the Son of the Carpenter, who had said to Man, that Religion consisted not in palaces or jails, nor in Priests or Kings, nor in churches, or costly ceremonial, but—mark the simplicity of the Carpenter's Son—in LOVING ONE ANOTHER.

"O, that I could paint to you the radiant forehead and earnest eyes of this Carpenter's Son, and show him to you as he lived among men, their Brother: clad like themselves, their Friend: for he said to them, '*God is our Father.*'"

"But he has been dead many centuries.—Behold him, not as he walked the sands of his native land, but as he is!"

He swept the cloak aside, which enveloped the limbs of the unknown. The cavern echoed with a cry of amazement and terror.

For there, very near the light, towered the Leaden Image, whose forehead stamped with despair, and motionless eyes full of unutterable anguish, and form clad in the garments of toil, seemed to imprison a Living Soul.

It was the Image of the Imprisoned Jesus.

"This is what Priest and King have made of the pure and beautiful spirit of the Carpenter's Son! They have robbed man of his Brother, his friend; they have confined the soul of the Mechanic in the creed and ritual of their Church; they have taken to themselves that Man of Nazareth, who never spoke of Priest or King, but with pity, reproach, or scorn.

"Brothers! Be it our task to take this Son of the Carpenter, to separate his loving spirit from church and creed, and lift him, once more, before the eyes of millions, not as the Incarnation of a Church, or the Imprisoned Christ of a ferocious superstition, but as the Carpenter's Son, who first embodied the truth of Brotherhood, and made it blossom in the hearts of men.

"With these three words—*The Carpenter's Son*—we can regenerate the world. We will go to the Poor. We will ask them—not to believe in the Trinity, or in the Unity of God, nor in Catholic, nor in Protestant, nor in Bud-dhu, nor in Mahommed—we will not waste time in comparing speculations, or analyzing creeds. Armed with this Christ of the Poor, we will say to the Poor, He was a Poor Man, such as you are. Like you he toiled. Like you he hungered. At the graves of Poor Men like you he wept. He lived for you—for you he died. Then listen to his voice, which utters all truth, in simple words—LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

The Peasant, whose animated features contrasted with the motionless lineaments of the Image by his side, now glanced around from face to face, speaking by turns to every one of the brothers. As he spoke, his voice became tremulous; his sunburnt features were wet with tears.

"And can we not accomplish the great work for man? Is there a Brother here, who can say no! who has the heart to say it? Here we are, men of all nations, colors and creeds. Can we not join our hands around the rock, as though it were an altar, and sacrifice our prejudices, our creeds at the feet of the Carpenter's Son?

"Mahommedan! I speak to you. In your traditions you have read of Jesus the Prophet. Do you object to Jesus the Carpenter's Son?

"Hindoo! Your traditions speak of a mysterious incarnation—of a sublime manifestation of God enshrined in the flesh—can you refuse to acknowledge and love the Spirit of God, enshrined in the form of a Carpenter's Son?

"Protestant, it is your boast to read the written word of God. Can you refuse the Carpenter's Son?

"Catholic—your traditions speak of Church, of Authority, of Popes invested with God-like power, and men sunk beneath the degradation of the brute creation, and yet, amid this horrible mass of error, there is here and there a word—a true word of the Carpenter's Son. Are you willing to sacrifice Church—Authority—Pope and Council, at the altar of Brotherhood, at the feet of the Carpenter's Son?



“Deist! It is to you I appeal. It is your delight to cherish the idea of one supreme God, only revealed to man, by the forms of external nature. Do you see God in the leaf and flower, and yet refuse to behold him in the radiant forehead, the peasant garb, the deathless words of the Carpenter’s Son?”

“Atheist! Yes, there is one in this band who cannot believe in the existence of a God. Let me have a word with you, my brother—let us talk with each other, in kindness. You are, perchance, so constituted that the power to believe is not in your nature. All reason and no faith. And yet your heart beats warmly for the good of man; it is your earnest desire that all men may be indeed brothers. Can you find in the page of any history,—in the record of any age or country—a Spirit at once so loving and so actual, so like a God and yet full of sympathy for man, as that of the Carpenter’s Son? Point me to the page—produce the record—and I will love you all the better!”

His eye gleaming, his forehead radiant, the impassioned Peasant glanced around, and paused, as if to note the effect of his words. There was stilness,—and then the air was full of sobs and groans.

They were not altogether sobs of anguish, groans of sorrow. They rose from their seats, they gathered round the sunburnt Peasant, and rent the air with incoherent cries.

Strange words were audible amid their cries—

“It is the Truth which our fathers sought for ages—it is the great Secret which will regenerate the World! Not the Christ of Theology, not the Catholic Christ, nor the Protestant Christ, but the Jesus of the Heart! The Carpenter’s Son, separte from all creeds, and only known as the Incarnation of Brotherhood!”

The Peasant took in his hand the veil which he had lifted from the dumb Face of the Image—his form was raised to its full stature—his eye burned as with fire from Heaven.

“Hold! Do I understand you, my brethren—are you willing to bury your creeds at the feet of the Carpenter’s Son, and believe only in the Brotherhood which shines from his face? Is it so? Then let us look for the day after the long night of hopeless Evil. And I too am willing to offer up my creed at the feet of the Carpenter’s Son!”

“Listen, for I have a confession to make. I have been educated to believe that Christ was in truth the very God. That the awful Being who made the stars, and dwelt in Eternity, was present—living, throbbing—in the breast of the Nazarene. Was enshrined in the Carpenter’s Son, made manifest in the flesh of that humble Son of the Poor. This I was taught to believe, and it was to me a holy thought, that Omnipotence became a suffering child of Toil, and dwelt, for a while, very humbly in the huts of the Poor, and died—feeling every pang of mortal anguish—upon a Felon’s tree. Died for you—for me—for us all!”

“And yet, my brothers, I am willing to sacrifice this belief—to consider it merely a form of words—only so that we may all meet upon one common ground, that we may all join our hands around one altar, and all bind to our hearts the Spirit of the Carpenter’s Son—the Incarnate form of Brotherhood among men!”

As he paused, he dropped the veil over the sad Image.

“Thus,” he cried, “Thus let us hide the Imprisoned Jesus of the Church. The Christ of the Heart moves in the bosom of the world—Soon the nations will know his spirit, and Kings and Priests will tremble, as the earth quivers at each throb from the Heart of the Carpenter’s Son.”

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## CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BROther ANSEL.

#### THE PROPHECY OF THE PEASANT.

“EMBODY the history of the Carpenter’s Son, let the Spirit of his life become the Soul of our Organization, and I—a rude Peasant man, born of the humble People—can predict to you the Future of mankind!

“Not fifty years from this hour, the voice of our Brotherhood will reach the heart of a young man, in the city of Paris. Even as he sits amid a band of boon companions, the cup in his hand, and his ruddy English face contrasted with the faces of the brown Frenchmen, the voice will reach him, and he will dash the cup to the floor, and feel the impulses of his great mission stir his soul.

“His great mission? Yes—this young Englishman, encircled by the gay youth of Paris, is destined by Almighty God to conquer the New World, armed with an olive branch instead of a sword. He will cross the Ocean, he will rear a People in the Wilderness, he will send forth his voice to the oppressed of all the earth, saying to them all—Come! Here is a Home for the down-trodden, here is an Altar for the exile and the wanderer. We know neither Priest nor King, in our New World at home. We are Brothers—our Father is God.’

“And the exile and the wanderer will come, and, with this Apostle to the New World, rear the Altar of Brotherhood in the wilderness.

“Indian! The Apostle will be just to you, and to your race! Even now, as the mists which cloud the Future roll aside, I behold him stand-

ing amid the red men, near a calm river's shore,—I hear the words of the Covenant which they make with each other ; a Covenant made without oath, or priest, or sword, and yet it will live when oaths, and priests, and swords are known no longer upon the face of the earth.

“After the Apostle has done his work, he will pass away. Years roll on—the colonists, the emigrants, the exiles of the New World begin to grow into a People. That New World, which the Almighty has reserved for the down-trodden of all nations and races, strengthens rapidly into an Empire, such as the world has never seen before—not of Kings, or of Priests—but an Empire of Men.

“That New World, which the Almighty has destined to be the young Heart and the young Brain of a decrepit Earth, thinking for all Peoples, the bold thoughts of freedom ; feeling for the wrongs of all races, and armed with the power to right those wrongs—the New World is assailed by all the infamies of the Old World, incarnate in the person of a King.

“He would enslave the young Empire with those customs and laws, which have drained the sap and the blood from the veins of the old, and turned an Eden into a Hell.

“But lo ! The same God who sent an Apostle of Peace to plant the Olive Branch of Brotherhood on the shores of the New World, now sends a Deliverer to assert the sanctity of the New World from all Kings, in the face of God and Man, and carve out a way for Brotherhood with his battle-sword.

“Among his legions I behold him, armed for the fight, and with the consciousness of a good cause flashing from his eyes, and investing his bold forehead with a sublime resolve.

“The Deliverer will come in the year 1775. He will combine in his own person, all those qualities which the world has never yet seen combined in one man. He will be a man of vigorous passions, fiery blood, temper as ardent as the southern sky. He will learn first to govern his passions, and rule his own soul, and therefore be fitted for the government of men, and the sway of an Empire. Years of danger and toil in the untrodden forests, will harden him into iron manhood. He will serve, he will suffer, so that he may always feel with those who are enslaved, and know the anguish which falls to the lot of the poor man, who never ceases to suffer and endure.

“This Deliverer will rise in the darkest hour of Despotism—he will achieve the freedom of the New World, and then—

“But hold ! There the cloud overcasts the Future ; I cannot read the Future of his life after the hour when he has won the battle for freedom.

“He may repeat the story of Cromwell, who saved his country from Kings, by usurping the power without the name.

“Yes, he may descend from his calm grandeur, as the Father of his



Country, and mingle in the herd of Kings, of Tyrants, of Conquerors, bartering immortal glory for the bauble of an hour.

“Then woe to America, and woe to Man!

“The New World will become the theatre of battles without an object, bloodshed without an aim. It will become a land of robbers, and of graves. The freedom, which the Deliverer might have achieved in all its details, in the year 1783, will be postponed until 1890. A terrible postponement, a fearful delay, only marked by murder in various forms—by petty Kings, conflicting with each other under various names.

“Let it therefore be our care, my brethren, to leave to our children as a holy trust, the Life of this Deliverer! Yes, his life! A Brother of our Order will go to him, as he prepares for battle, and confront him with a Dagger and a Sword. ‘This Sword is consecrated for thy defence, so long as thou art true to thy country, and to man. This Dagger is consecrated for thy Death, the moment thou art false!’

“Let us write it in our records, let us teach it in our solemn ceremonies, that upon the Truth or Falsehood of this Deliverer, who will come in the year 1775, hangs the destiny of mankind, for at least three centuries.

“Does he prove true? Then the fire of Brotherhood lighted by the Apostle, in the wilds of America, in 1682, and defended by the Deliverer in 1775, will illuminate the world.

“*The name of that Deliverer will become the universal word for* ‘FREEDOM.’

“Does he prove false to his great trust? Ah—the picture is too dark—it spreads before me, but I dare not contemplate its incredible details——

“In case he faithfully fulfils the awful trust confided to his hands, then behold the Future of America, and of the World!

“America, as I have said, will then in truth become the young Heart, and the young Brain of a decrepit Earth. The pulsations of that Heart, and the thoughts of that Brain, will shake the World.

“France, beautiful France—the land desecrated by religious wars and saintly massacres,—will be the first to feel the throbbings of that Heart, and echo the name of the New World Deliverer amid her songs of Brotherhood.

“France will be chosen by God to fight the first battle on the soil of Europe in the cause of Man.

The heart sickens and the eye grows dim, but to gaze upon the details of that battle, fought by France in the name of Men, against the Priests and Kings of an enslaved world.

“Even now I see it—it is there—that solitary glimpse—it is a river of blood, swelling fast into an ocean, with a corse upon every billow. It is a people, degraded by the slavery of centuries, suddenly transformed into a horde of Demons, who not only sweep Priest and King into the bloody

wave, not only level palace and jail, beneath their crimsoned feet—but—O God! can it be! they blot the name of God from the sky, and write upon the grave—‘There is no Immortality. Death is but a sleep.’

“At this period there will arise in France a Prophet of Blood. He is there—I behold him standing amid millions of slaves, drunken with their first breath of freedom. His throne, a strange engine of murder, erected on a platform, with an axe gleaming from its timbers. A slender man, with a haggard complexion, eyes filled with injected blood, features compressed, as with the impulse of an unrelenting will, he stands upon the platform, and shouts to the freed slaves in a shrill voice, as the rich, the noble, and the beautiful, fall headless at his feet. ‘More heads,’ he shrieks, ‘more heads for the altar of the Revolution! More blood—more blood to wash the record of the poor man’s wrongs from the history of ages! The Rich have had the world long enough—it is now the day of the poor.’

“It will be a terrible day for Kings, and for the rich men, who believe in Kings, when this Messiah of Carnage comes up from the cloud of Revolution; a lurid Meteor, shining with a pale, gloomy grandeur over a world of blood!

“He will arise in France, I say, he will arise after the Deliverer of the New World hath done his work, and he will prepare the way for the coming of a Crowned Avenger.

“And even he will feel the divine beauty of the Carpenter’s Son, and hope for a calm time of Brotherhood, after the tempest of infernal passion is over.

“At last he will fall beneath the gory wheels of Revolution,—beneath those wheels, which were hurled onward by his own arm—but in the moment of his fall, he will foresee the coming of the blessed day of Brotherhood.

“Nay—he will die upon that unknown engine of murder, which was his throne, by the very axe which has drunk the blood of royalty and beauty—he will die a wretched and accursed thing, his last groan chorused by the demon yells of that Mob, who were yesterday his Brethren—but in his last moment, a Hope will brighten over his glassy eyes, and his clotted lips will tremble with the accents of Prophecy—

“‘After me a Crowned Avenger comes! When my body is in the ditch, and my name given out to all the world as a Proverb of loathing, the Crowned Avenger will start from the People—he will build himself a palace from the Thrones of fallen Kings—he will write his name upon the Globe in characters of fire. He will avenge me!

“‘Without me, this Crowned Avenger could never have appeared. I have prepared the way for him—I go to darkness, and no one pities me. And he, too, will be crushed beneath the weight of his greatness, he too, will prepare the way for another, and a Nobler Man.

"Thus, my brothers, you have before you the three great Epochs which will mark the history of Man, within the next three hundred years.

"First, the Epoch of the Apostles, who, armed with the Love which dwelt in the breast of the Carpenter's Son, will rear the altar of Brotherhood on the shores of the New World, thus promulgating to all mankind the Divine Truth, that the New World is not for Priests nor Kings, nor for any form of superstition or privilege, but for Man—sacred and set apart by God for the millions who toil.

"Second, the Epoch of the Deliverer, who, called by God, will take up the sword, and even as the Carpenter's Son scourged the money-changers from the Temple of Jerusalem, so will he scourge the oppressors of body and soul from that holiest Temple of Brotherhood, the land of the New World.

"In case the Deliverer, after giving freedom to the New World, proves false to his trust, and takes to himself a Crown and Throne, then the history of the Future is beset by clouds that have no ray to lighten their omnipotent gloom.

"But should he prove faithful to his great trust, and after accomplishing the work of freedom, yield his sword into the hands of the people, and become, for the sake of the Holy Cause, a Man among Men, a Brother among Brothers, then will follow—

"The Third Epoch. The Epoch of the Crowned Avenger, whose tremendous battles, supernatural glory, and Death sublime in its very isolation, will prepare the world for the approach of the Holiest Epoch, for the Coming of the Universal Liberator.

"The Epoch of Brotherhood among men—the Liberator of all classes, nations, and races of the great family.

"In the year of the Carpenter's Son 1848, or in 1884, this Epoch and this Liberator will be announced by convulsions over all the world.

"Monarchy, grown drunk with its habit of oppression and bloodshed, will press the millions who toil, to the last extent of sufferance and endurance. Rich Men will say, triumphantly, that there is no God but Gold, no Heaven but in getting more wealth, no hell but in Poverty. They will regard the Poor—that is, nine-tenths of the human family, as old fables tell us, the Damned are regarded by the Fiends—as the objects of alternate mockery and vengeance; as things of dumb wood and stone; as beasts; as any thing but souls born of God and redeemed by his Spirit, incarnate in the Son of the Carpenter.

"Rich Men will gather round the Throne in England, and urge Monarchy—already bloated with crime—to new exactions, and place in its grasp incredible improvements in the kingly art of murder.

"Rich Men in Ireland will pour into the cup of that People's woe,—that cup which has been slowly filling for centuries—the last drop of bitterness. The cup of Ireland's despair will be full at last, and the Rich



He stands upon the Egyptian pyramid, and, with his sad, thoughtful eyes, surveys a world that is to be conquered by him. He girdles one-half the world with a belt of cannon and musquet, bayonet and sword. Not a land in the Old World but is peopled by his armies—already he stretches forth his arm toward the New.

“And this man,—the Crowned Avenger of the People—with all his bloodshed, is a holy thing in the eyes of Heaven, compared with the noblest King on the face of the earth.

“He comes to begin for Europe that work which the Apostles and the Deliverer accomplished for the New World.

“And after his work is done, and he has scourged the Kings as with the lash of a God, and made them the humble ministers of his will, he will be delivered into their hands; and, afraid of the Man, even when they have possession of his body, the Kings will bury the Crowned Peasant in the profound solitudes of an Island that stands alone in the centre of an ocean.

“There, isolated from mankind, and secluded with his own heart, the Avenger will die, his last gasp embittered by the persecutions of petty men, with brows of clay and hearts of stone.

“After the body is dead, and Kings have worked their will upon it, the Soul of the Avenger will come back to France, and throb with terrible life in new revolutions.

“That soul, redeemed from the stains which darkened its beauty, will hover, like a good omen, over the destiny of mankind, and dwell in the hearts of the French people, as the thunder dwells in the clouds of heaven.

“For that soul prepared the way for the coming of a Deliverer for Europe, even as the thunder and the lightning precede the glorious calm of the summer day.

“And he will come—yes, the Deliverer of Europe,—of the world, per chance—he will come at last. There are various figures written on the clouds of the Future, and I may not read them now.

“There—glorious date, that tells of a world enfranchised by the spirit of Brotherhood embodied in the Carpenter’s Son—it tosses before me, amid clouds of rainbow beauty. Is it 1848—or is it 1884?—there is a mist before my eyes—I cannot trace the figures plainly, but

“—The Deliverer of Europe—of the world—will come at last, and come with the arm to avenge and the spirit to love!

“Kings will shrink from their thrones at his coming; the slaves of the Old World will start into a people, and even the black slaves of the New will dare to claim a portion for themselves in the Love of God, and grasp for themselves a share in the Brotherhood of Man.

“Even the red man of the forest, smitten by the iron finger of White Civilization, which poisons his heart and withers his brain, will look up and see the face of the Carpenter’s Son, smiling blessings upon him even from the ruins of Despotism and Superstition.

“ ‘And, when the day of that Nobler man, that Universal Liberator, comes—when nations and empires, and dynasties, and sects and creeds have crumbled into dust before the light of Brotherhood, and the freed earth shall glow with gladness under the eye of God,—then shall justice be done to my memory, and men shall no longer couple my name with curses, but speak of me as of one who sacrificed, not merely life, but fame, for the sake of the Poor.’ ”

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## CHAPTER NINETEENTH.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF BROTHEN ANSELM.

#### THE SUPREME CHIEF OF THE ROSY CROSS.

“AND this—” faltered the speaker, wiping the moisture from his brow—“this will occur before the Eighteenth Century is done—yes—I behold even now a terrible date, written in black characters upon a lurid cloud—the date is 1789!

“Yes, Priests and Kings will drink to the last dregs the cup which they filled for the lips of their slaves. They will have to combat, not merely a horde of Slaves, but a Mob of Demons.

“But in order that the freedom, so fearfully won by the People transformed into Demons, may not be lost in endless massacre, a Man will arise, who will place his foot upon the necks of Kings, and mock their power to scorn, by assuming a power, unknown before in the annals of the human race. That boundless power will be assumed and worn in the name of the People.

“The New World demanded first an Apostle, then a Deliverer. Europe demands a crowned peasant—an AVENGER.

“Rising from the common herd, this man will become the Cromwell of a World, believing not so much in the people as in armies; not so much in God as in his own Destiny.

“His bold forehead, stamped with more than kingly grandeur, his eyes lighted by a soul conscious of its own Destiny, his features shadowed into the warm bronze of the south, and marked by the outlines of the oriental races, appear before me now, like the face of a Demi-God.

“He traverses Europe, leaving his bloody foot-prints upon every shore.

Man will have to drink it from the hand of a Demon, who was once a peasant, once a man.

“Rich Men in America will strengthen the chains by which millions of the Black race are held in bondage. They will regard these millions of the Black race as beasts of the field, and herd them together in profitable Incest; selling the fruit of the mother’s womb before it has seen the light, and holding Property in Human Flesh, in Human Blood, in Immortal Souls.”

A groan echoed from the assemblage.

“This in America? This in the New World?”

“Yes! This in the land for which the Deliverer has consecrated his sword! In order that Man may know the value of freedom, it is necessary that he should first suffer the pains of hell, in the ditch of slavery. And, of all the forms of slavery which the world ever saw, or ever will see, that which will curse the American Continent, in the year 1848 or 1884—under the name of Black Slavery, stands arrayed before my vision as the most appalling. It is—pardon the warmth of my utterance, for over the mists of the future I see it, even now, in its garb of crimes—it is an Infernal Trinity, composed of three Fiends, who are called Atheism, Incest, Blasphemy.

“Atheism, but not the honest Atheism which denies a God in Nature, and blunders upon a something called chance; but a ferocious Atheism, which builds altars to God, worships him with the pomp of priest and ritual, and at the same moment shows that it does not believe in his existence, does not fear his vengeance, for it degrades his Image into a brute.

“Incest, for in order to make Flesh and Blood more profitable, it encourages

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“Blasphemy, for it not only makes the New World a reproach in the lips of the Tyrants of the old world, but it turns all that is holy in religion into a Lie. It cries, “Hail, Lord Jesus!” and with that cry, treads the Black Brother of the Carpenter’s Son deeper into bondage.

“When the blessed Epoch is very near,—when the footstep of the Universal Liberator begins to move the earth—then the Black Slaves in America, the White Slaves in Ireland—in fact, the Slaves over all the world—will rise upon their masters, rise without an object or an aim, but urged to ferocious action, by an impulse which cannot be resisted or controlled.

“Then will occur the Jubilee of brute force, the Saturnalia of Murder. It will be a day of reckoning for the Rich Man over all the world. He will learn at last, that it is better to give some light of education, some gleam of immortality, even to a slave. He will, I say, learn that it is better to combat an educated slave, whose nature retains some ray of its Divine origin, much better, as God lives! than to combat a Brute in human shape, who knows no limit in his vengeance, and sacrifices, in his hellish



fury, not only the rich man, but the beautiful wife who nestles in his arms, and the little child who clings to his knees.

"It will be a terrible going out of Egypt—an Exodus of incredible carnage, which the Poor will accomplish, ere the great day of their Redemption.

"The Israelites of old, chained in Egypt, went forth one day, and the sea, parting on either side, left bare a safe pathway for the liberated slaves. Their pursuers followed, and were lost in the waves. The freed slaves beheld their livid faces, and heard their impotent cries of despair. This was indeed a terrible sight for Egypt, but a glorious day for Israel.

"Remember, however, that the Israelites, enslaved by the Egyptians, only symbolized the Poor Man all over the world, enslaved by the Rich.

"Therefore, I say, it will be a terrible going out of Egypt which the Poor Man will accomplish, when all at once he escapes from thralldom, through a Red Sea. That Red Sea nothing but the blood which flows from the veins of the tyrants of the Poor.

"It will, I repeat, be an Exodus of incredible carnage, which the Angels will behold on that day, when the Poor Man shall hear the voice of God, calling upon him in his bondage—'Arise! The hour hath come. The cup is full. Arise, ye millions of the human race,—Arise, ye races and tribes of the Poor! Go out from this bondage, though the way of your redemption is paved with the bodies of the Rich, though their blood rolls before you like a sea. Go out from bondage! For it is the Exodus of the Poor, for which ye have waited and endured, and wept your bloody tears so long!'

"And the same God who gave a Moses to the chained Israelites, will call forth, from the shadows of Poverty in the year 1848, or 1884—the Liberator of a World."

The man with sunburnt features and knotted hands, stood alone, near the veiled figure, the centre of a group, agitated by emotion too deep for words.

They looked upon him, as he arose in their midst, clad like an humble peasant, and felt that he was a Prophet—despite his toil-hardened hands and coarse attire—a Prophet called from the ranks of the Poor, to foretell the future of a World in chains.

Overwhelmed by the intensity of his thoughts, the Peasant rested both hands upon the shoulders of the veiled figure, while his chest shook as with intense physical torture, and the cold damps stood in beads upon his brow. His eyes grew brighter every moment, while the brown hue of his bold countenance was marked by a death-like pallor.

"At last," he murmured amid the writhings of his inexplicable agony, "At last, Blessed Lord, the Lead will become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile."

It was a long time, ere the sensation created by the words of this rude

Prophet, permitted the members of this secret Brotherhood to give utterance to their thoughts in speech.

The aged Swede arose.

His white hairs waved in the wind, which came in fitful gusts from the mouth of the cavern, and the faint light imparted its gloomy radiance to his withered features.

In a tremulous voice, he spoke of the great object which had called the Chiefs of the Rosy Cross from all quarters of the globe.

They had been called, not so much by the command of a Supreme Chief, as by the voice of a tradition, which had been treasured in the innumerable branches, or Circles of the great Brotherhood, since the earlier years of the Tenth Century.

That tradition pointed out a particular year in the seventeenth Century, which would witness a new Era in the history of the Order.

On the appointed year, at a certain hour of a certain day, the Chiefs of the Brotherhood, from all quarters of the globe, were to assemble—so the tradition enjoined—in the cavern of a German mountain, long known in the history of the Order.

They were to choose by lot a Supreme Chief, who would be known all over the world, to all the Brothers of the Rosy Cross, and to all secret orders, beneath the Brotherhood, by a certain symbol, engraven on a golden medal.

That Symbol was a Globe, a Rising Sun and a Cross, encircled by the Hebrew words, in the Hebrew character—

VAYOMER ELOHEIM YEHEE AUR VAYEHEE AUR.

“These words,” continued the aged Swede, “indicate the light which, shining from the councils of our Brotherhood, shall illuminate all the world. A light spoken into existence by the voice of God, which shall do the work of God in every human heart. Brothers, to me, as the oldest of the Chiefs, has this Medal been entrusted. It was given into my hands, by a Chief who had reached the venerable age of one hundred years. I now surrender it into your hands—I place it upon this rock, which forms the altar of our worship. Let no one touch it, nor gaze upon it, until the Supreme Chief of the Brotherhood is elected.”

He placed the Medal on the altar, where it glimmered with a pale golden light.

An inexplicable sensation, pervaded the assemblage, as every eye was centred upon this most sacred symbol of the Order. It was endeared to their hearts by a thousand ceremonies; it was linked with the overwhelming associations of the ancient renown and almost Godlike power of the Brotherhood, in the days of old.

The Hebrew words rudely graved upon it, gave some color to the tradition which taught that it had been coined by the hand of the High Priest Aaron, in the days of the Wilderness.

True, the globe and the cross seemed to indicate a much more recent origin. Yet the globe was known as an emblem in the secret Brotherhood, long before it was discovered that the earth itself was a globe. The Cross is found in the pyramids of Egypt, erected thousands of years before the era of the Carpenter's Son.

In a word, this medal, glimmering dimly upon the surface of the rock, overwhelmed the Brothers with the memories of three thousand years.

Now commenced the ceremonial of election.

Every chief wrote his name upon a tablet. Their tablets were given into the hands of the Swede, who placed them in a hollow of the rock, which supplied the place of an Urn.

"One by one, you will advance, my Brothers, and draw a single tablet from this hollow in the rock. It is asserted by the traditions of our order, that the great work of Supreme Chief will fall upon the Brother who draws the tablet on which the sign of the Cross is traced. Advance, my Brothers—but hold—let me first ask every Brother to raise his clasped hands above his head, and swear by the Globe, by the Rising Sun and the Cross, to be faithful to the Supreme Chief, whom we are about to elect from our midst—to obey his commands without hesitation, scruple or reserve, and to recognise his Power, whenever it is attested by the most sacred symbol of our Order!"

There was a pause—and then from every lip arose the solemn chorus ;

"We swear by the Globe, by the Rising Sun, and by the Cross!"

Perchance the outward history of the world, that history which only pictures the appearances, not the realities of things, never described a scene of sterner grandeur, than that which was now in progress within the walls of the mountain cavern.

The Representatives of the various Destinies of Nations, were met in awful Council, to decide the Destiny of all mankind, to elect, in fact, one man, who should in his turn embody the destiny of a World.

One by one they came toward the hollow in the rock. The torchlight shone upon their various costumes, and displayed the workings of those contrasted faces, every one the representative of a People, the type of a race. The blanket of the Indian, adorned with the many-colored wampum-belt, contrasted with the turban and flowing robes of the Moslem. The tawny Hindoo, the bronzed Spaniard, the florid German, mingled together in that throng ; and the hardy Colonist from New England stood side by side with the stern soldier of Cromwell, and the down-trodden Son of Ireland.

The Jesuit, too, folding his hands over his black robe, with a deep thought upon his tonsured brow, stood near the worshipper of Con-fav-tse from the far land of China

The Black Man was not alone. His jet-black features, scarred with the traces of that incredible thralldom from which he was a fugitive, he



joined hands with the agile Son of Italy, whose sculptured lineaments spoke of the races of Ancient Rome.

The gray-garbed Peasant stood alone, leaning upon the veiled figure with his knotted hands. Few could guess his country or his race. His bold features, darkened by the sun, spoke somewhat of an Oriental race. The rumor ran from lip to lip, that he was from an island in the Mediterranean.

His thoughts were absorbed by the overwhelming solemnity of the moment.

They were about to elect a Man, who would control for good or evil,—for good or evil in the present age, and through all future time—the immense organization of the Brotherhood.

On whom would the great work fall?

The Turk, the Hindoo, the Arab—the eyes of the Peasant roved along the throng—or perchance—the Black Man? By the chance or fatality of that mysterious lottery, the destiny of the Order and the World might be embodied in a Negro;—a Negro! One of that thrice degraded race, who have been ever doomed to drain the bitterest dregs of slavery, and wear its heaviest chain upon their lacerated souls.

Meanwhile the aged Swede sat apart, his white beard floating over his breast. His days were numbered; he was not a Candidate for the great office; and more than this, he had been the last keeper of the Sacred Symbol of Brotherhood. He was therefore not a Candidate, but a Judge.

While the Peasant stood leaning against the veiled figure, the other brethren advanced one by one to the hollow in the rock, and turning their faces away, drew forth a single tablet from the darkness.

The Peasant was aroused from his reverie by the voice of the Swede—  
“Brother, it is now your turn,” he said.

The Peasant looked around with a stare of vague amazement.

“Have all drawn but me?” he exclaimed.

Even as he spoke, he beheld the brethren standing against the walls of the cavern, with their tablets in their hands.

“Is not the tablet with the Cross yet drawn?” he ejaculated, while a tremor seized his limbs—“and have all the Brothers advanced to the rock—all but me?”

“No,” answered the Swede—“There are three others besides you—”

The Peasant followed the extended hand of the Swede, and beheld standing near him, the Indian, the Colonist from New England, and the Black Man.

“On one of the four will fall the office of Supreme Chief!” exclaimed the Swede.

Then it was that a wild suspense seized every breast, and all eyes were turned upon the four. The Indian and the Black Man stood on the right of the veiled figure—the New England Colonist on his left.

The Peasant, leaning upon the leaden image, trembled from head to foot, and veiled his face.

"Advance, Brother from the New World," he cried in a husky voice—"The tablet marked with the Cross is yours!"

The Colonist advanced with a firm step, but his hand trembled, his face changed color, as he drew a single tablet from the hollow in the rock. He dared not look upon it, but stood gazing with a vacant glance in the face of the Swede.

"Is it the tablet marked with the Cross?" interrogated the Peasant, as he raised his face—his voice, changed and hollow, resembled a prolonged groan.

The interest of the Chiefs became intense and painful.

"The tablet! The tablet!" was heard in murmurs—and in various tongues on every side.

The Colonist at last gathered courage; he gazed upon the tablet—

"My own name!" he said, and turned away.

The stillness which succeeded, was like the grave.

The contest was now between the Peasant, the Indian, and the Black Man. The Indian next advanced. Stern and proudly erect, he wound his blanket over his broad chest, and his aquiline profile was described in bold shadow on the wall of the cavern, as he drew near the hollow in the rock.

Extending his hand without a tremor, he also drew forth a solitary tablet, and held it toward the light.

You could not hear the faintest echo of a sound. All was terribly still.

"The name of my Hindoo Brother," said the Indian, as he resumed his place.

The office of Supreme Chief now lay between the Peasant and the Black Man.

As for the Peasant, seized by an uncontrollable emotion, he bowed his tall form once more against the Leaden Image, and concealed his face from the light.

The Black Man advanced a step—hesitated—and returned to his place.

"Brother, it is your time," and as he spoke, he turned his harsh features toward the Peasant.

There was no reply. The Peasant, who but a moment ago had seemed a Prophet, inspired for a great work, now rested his arms upon the Leaden Image, and hid his face, while his strong frame shook with agony.

"Advance, brother," exclaimed the Swede to the Negro—"The office of Supreme Chief is within your grasp!"

The Peasant heard the words of the Swede, and a cold shudder pervaded his limbs. So near, so very near that Power, which held in its hand the Destiny of the human race, and yet it was about to glide from his

touch. He heard the footsteps of the Black Man—he knew by the dead stillness that the Negro was standing near the hollow in the rock—he felt as he heard the universal ejaculation, that the Negro had become the Supreme Chief of the Order.

Yet hark! The voice of the Black Man is heard—

“I have drawn a tablet, on which my Red Brother’s name is written,” he said, and all was still again.

The heart of the Peasant bounded within his breast. Possessed in every nerve by an intense ambition, he had writhed with all the agony of suspense, and now his blood became fire, with the pulsations of a boundless joy.

The Tablet on which the Cross was traced was his own—with his form bowed and his face concealed, he awaited the salutations of his brethren. But suddenly his blood grew cold again, as the voice of the Swede fell on his ear:

“Brother, advance. You are the last. Two tablets alone remain in the hollow of the rock. On one your name is written, for it has not been drawn by any of the brethren. On the other the Cross is traced. *In case you do not draw the Tablet with the Cross, a new election will be held.*”

The Peasant heard the last words, and raised his head. Every eye remarked the pallor of his face.

“Two tablets!” he echoed, with a vacant stare—“I had forgotten—” he paused, and turning his eyes upon the throng, exclaimed—“I am not worthy of this awful trust. I will not place my hand in the hollow of the rock. Let the tablets be cast into that hollow once more, and the great office will doubtless fall to the lot of some more worthy brother.”

But they silenced him with their murmurs—every one, from the Swede to the Black Man, bade him advance.

It was a terrible moment for that rude Peasant, with the gray garb and sunburnt face, when, crossing the cavern floor, shading his agitated features from the light, he placed his knotted hand in the hollow of the rock. He felt the two tablets beneath his fingers. He knew not which to take. One moment he desired the great office with all his soul, the next, he felt unworthy, and hoped that he might draw the tablet inscribed with his own name.

“It is an awful Power to be placed in the hands of one man,” he muttered, as he raised his hand, and without daring to gaze upon the tablet, held it behind his back toward the light.

The Swede arose.

“You suffer, my brother,” he whispered—“your face is like the face of a dead man—I will read the tablet for you.”

The Peasant could not speak a word, but he listened to the footsteps of the Swede. There was a moment’s pause—he could feel the intense in-



terest of the Brotherhood, as he heard the sound of their deep-drawn breath.

"Brothers, behold!"—it was the voice of the Swede, and the Peasant, with his face turned from the light, heard the cry which filled the cavern. That cry echoed from the very hearts of the assembled brethren, as every eye beheld the tablet which the old man held toward the light.

And yet the Peasant dared not turn and know his destiny. That murmur was so confused, so vague, he could not divine its true meaning, but he felt the hand of the Swede upon his own, and felt himself urged gently to the light.

"Brothers! salute the Supreme Chief of our Brotherhood!" the voice of the Swede swelled through the cavern.

For a moment the Peasant tottered to and fro, while his sight grew dim, and the figures of the brethren flitted before him like the confused shapes of a dream. But that moment over, his sight grew clear, his limbs were firm—glancing around with unwavering eyes, he beheld himself encircled by the Chiefs of the Brotherhood, he felt the Golden Medal in his hand.

"Now—" he said, while a deep rapture softened his bold features, and his form, clad in humble peasant attire, towered in the centre of that throng—"Now, indeed, my work is before me. It is for me to embody in the ritual of our Brotherhood, the life of the Carpenter's Son!"

Joining hands, they encircled him, and pronounced with one accord, in the unknown tongue, the ancient formula of the Order. The Swede laid his withered hand upon his brown hairs and blessed him—Hindoo, Turk, Jesuit, Indian, Englishman and Spaniard, Dane and German, gathered around, a rampart of living hearts.

The Negro, as the most degraded and down-trodden of all earth's children, pronounced the last word of the consecration—

"It is from a Child of Toil that the Children of Toil must look for their redemption."

The Supreme Chief of the Brotherhood raised the Golden Medal toward the light, and examined its details with a careful scrutiny.

"On one side the Globe, the Cross and the Rising Sun, with the inscription, 'VAYOMER ELOHEIM YEHEE AUR, VAYEHEE AUR'—'Then spoke God, Let there be light, and there was light.' The reverse of the Medal is blank. It bears no inscription. One day it will have an inscription, a glorious inscription, but not until earth is redeemed and all men are Brothers!"

"Yes, long ages after we are dead, my brethren, some Chief of our Order will write upon the blank side of the Medal—

*"Earth redeemed by the Spirit of the Carpenter's Son, embodied in the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross."*

The speaker took a sharp-pointed dagger from his breast, and resting the medal upon the rock, traced in rude characters, two dates, beneath the symbol of the Order. These dates were "1777" and "1848-84."

Then turning to the silent brotherhood, he exclaimed—

“In the year 1777, another general convocation of the Chiefs of the Brotherhood will be held in the land of the New World. Then the Golden Medal will again be placed in the hands of a Supreme Chief, elected in accordance with the injunction of the most aged Chief. Until that time,—in case I die before it arrives—the office of Supreme Chief will remain vacant. And in the year 1848—or 84, a general convocation will be held, at a point to be designated by the Supreme Chief elected in the year 1777.”

Glancing into the faces of the encircling Chiefs, the Peasant, now become the Supreme Power of the Order, beckoned with his hand to seven brethren, who separated themselves from the throng, and took their places at his side.

“These are the Supreme Elders of the Brotherhood, appointed by me to assist in the government of the Order, and to receive the sacred symbol in case of my death. They are known in our traditions as THE SEVEN.—Brother,” he continued, turning to the first of the Seven—“Your name and country?”

The First of the Seven was a man of commanding presence, with a face traced with the indications of a serene soul.

“I was born in England,” he said, “but now that my native land is a home no longer for freemen, I have no country. I am about to depart to the New World. Not to New England, for it is accursed by the Demon of Persecution, but to a more southern clime. My name is Lawrence Washington.”

The Peasant wrote that name upon the Tablet marked with the Cross.—“Washington!” he murmured, as though he had heard of it before.

The Supreme Chief turned to the Second of the Seven. A man of slender frame, sharp features, stamped with an iron resolution, and eyes full of enthusiasm.

“Your country, Brother, and your name?”

“I am of France,” responded a shrill, discordant voice—“My name is Robespierre.”

The Supreme Chief shuddered as he wrote that name underneath the first.

“I have seen it,” he murmured, in a tone inaudible to the Brethren—“I have seen it in my dreams, written in red characters, upon the timbers of that unknown engine of Murder.”

To the Third he turned. The harsh features of the Black Man met his gaze.

“I have no name,” cried the Negro—“I am called Isaac the Slave.”

After he had written the designation of the African beneath the other names, he turned to the Fourth. The Indian, standing alone, with his blanket falling over his broad chest.

“My country? Wherever the White Race leaves our people a wig-

wam or a hunting-ground. Write, Supreme Chief, that my name is Talondoga, and my country the Land of the Setting Sun."

"Thy children," murmured the Peasant, "shall yet sweep the white race with fire and sword."

The Fifth answered proudly—"I am a German. A tiller of the soil. Write John, the Serf; and as for country, say that I have no Fatherland but the grave."

It was now the turn of the Sixth. A dark-visaged Hindoo, clad in the garb of the lowest order of Hindoo priesthood.

"Buldarh of the far Eastern land—a Pariah, who has no lower *caste* beneath him."

"Thy country shall be given up awhile to Moloch, incarnate in the English Monarchy. But when the oppressor has trampled you for a hundred years, you will learn his cunning, and crush him with his own weapons."

Thus speaking, this Peasant Ruler wrote the name of the Pariah beneath that of the German Serf.

The Seventh: an Italian, whose face seemed oppressed with the Doom of his country.

"Giovanni Ferreti!" murmured the Supreme Chief, as he wrote this name beneath the others. "Fear not, Italian! Humble artizan as you are, it is *from* your race that there will spring a high-souled Man, who will strike astonishment into the hearts of all men, for he will embody in his own person, the functions of Pope and Liberator!"

"There are the names of your Elders—of the Seven," exclaimed the Supreme, after a pause—"Let us behold them, and write them on our hearts—"

And he held the tablet before the eyes of the Brethren. These names were written underneath the Cross.

1. Lawrence Washington.
2. Robenspierre.
3. Isaac the Slave.
4. Talondoga the Indian.
5. The German Serf.
6. Buldarh the Hindoo and Pariah.
7. Giovanni Ferreti.

"It only remains for me to write my own name," said the Supreme Chief, with a sad smile. These words excited a universal interest. Every Brother was anxious to know the name of this man, who had been called by Destiny to the supreme sway of the Brotherhood.

"My father," he said, "was an Arab, who, cast ashore upon an Island in the Mediterranean, was enslaved by a Lord, whose castle is built among the rocks. My mother was a native of the island. As I do not know the name of my father in the Arab tongue, I will—after the manner of slaves



over all the world—take the name of the lord who enslaved my father. The race of that lord has become extinct; himself, his children, all his people, were swept away by plague; but the Son of the Arab Slave will perpetuate their name—”

And beneath the names of the Seven, he wrote the words—

“LEON BUONAPARTE OF CORSICA.”

His bronzed features grew radiant, his dark eyes gathered new light, as he gazed upon that name.

“Perchance, at some future day,” he said, “that name of the extinct Italian noble, who built his castle on the rocks of Corsica—that name, now assumed by his Slave, may shake the world, and read, to the eyes of Kings, like the handwriting on Belshazzar’s wall!”

And raising his right hand, which grasped the Golden Medal, toward heaven, he stood motionless as stone, while his eyes, shining with prophetic light, seemed to behold already a world of slaves starting from their chains, and building, upon the wrecks of Despotism and Superstition, the sublime altar of human Brotherhood.

“The day is breaking, my brothers, and we must separate,” he said, as he took the torch and drew near the veiled figure once more—“But before you hasten to your stations, in the various regions of the globe, we will meet again. Then,—at our next meeting, which shall not be many days from the present hour—I will reveal to you the regenerated ceremonial of our Brotherhood. Yes, I will reveal to you the new organization of the Order, in which the Spirit of the Carpenter’s Son shall throb and burn as the life of all life. Armed with this spirit—embodied in ritual and constitution—you will hasten to your various circles, scattered over the surface of the Globe, and swell your divisions of the great Fraternity, by new converts, and go on in your great work, until the masses begin to feel that the Spirit of the Carpenter’s Son, freed from the body of the leaden Church, walks divinely over the earth again, speaking to the poor, words that are mightier than armies.

“Yes—I anticipate the question which rises to your lips and shines in your eyes. You ask me, what manner of scenes from the life of the Carpenter’s Son, I would embody in the ritual of our Order? The question is not difficult to answer.

“Have you ever heard of the day, when that Carpenter’s Son arose in a Nazarene Synagogue, and proclaimed, clad, as he was, in the gaberdine of toil, proclaimed in the face of the Rich Man and the Priest, that the Spirit of God was upon him to preach good tidings to the Poor, liberty to the bondman, the good time of Brotherhood to all men?

“Or, have you ever heard of the Rich Man, who came one day to the Carpenter’s Son, and, won by the divine beauty of that Spirit which shone in his eyes, asked sorrowfully, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’

"The Carpenter's Son looked in the face of the Rich man, marked his robes of fine linen and purple, and then said, in that voice which melted the souls of all who listened to its music—

"*'Sell all thou hast and give to the Poor!'*"

"Such scenes as these we will embody in our ritual, and make the life of our life! Yes, to the Poor we will preach good tidings, liberty, light! But to the Rich, armed with the Justice of the Carpenter's Son, we will thunder the sentence which God has pronounced upon their heads—*'Sell all thou hast and give to the Poor! Restore to the mass of mankind the lands which ye have stolen from them, and baptized with their blood! Divide among the Poor your ill-gotten gold—give back, give back, in the name of God, your usurped power, and let your tardy Repentance be aided by a strict and universal Restitution!'*"

The words had not passed his lips, when he dashed the torch upon the ground, and the cavern was enveloped in darkness. By the last ray, the Brothers beheld his sunburnt features flashing as with a divine radiance, and through the darkness, they heard him speak in a low, deep voice, tremulous with unutterable joy—

"Then, indeed, shall the Lead become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile."

HERE ENDETH THE MANUSCRIPT OF BROTHER ANSELM.

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## CHAPTER TWENTIETH.

### THE LILY.

COMPLETELY overwhelmed by the revelations of this Manuscript, which he had taken from the breast of the Leaden Image, Paul remained like a statue upon the oaken bench, for some moments after he had finished those incredible pages, without the power to speak or stir. His eyes were fixed, their brightness dimmed by a misty film. He looked upon the trees, the grass, the flowers, but did not behold any thing save the Phantoms of the Manuscript.

The sun was low in the heaven, and the thick shadows began to gather round the Block-House.

But Paul did not mark the declining sun, nor call to mind his promise

to meet Reginald at sunset under the Blasted Pine. His soul was absorbed—bewildered by the Revelations of the Manuscript. The forms of the Secret Brotherhood flitted between his eyes and the light; he saw that Prophet-Peasant in his gray garb stand beside the veiled figure, while words full of divine inspiration fell from his lips.

His thoughts in truth were crowded and tumultuous; a thousand images whirled through his brain.

And yet, amid the very chaos of his musings, there came certain well-defined ideas shooting through the gloom, like stars through the darkness of night.

“The Golden Medal is in existence! I may possess it, and with it grasp the power of the Brotherhood. A strange Prophecy, and yet it has in part been fulfilled. The Apostle of the New World came long years ago in the person of William Penn. The time of the Deliverer is at hand. I saw him consecrated, and it is my destiny to guard him from the hands of his foes.”

He turned the last page of the Manuscript, and started from the bench as he recognised the handwriting of his father.

“You have read, my Son, and it is now your duty to obey.

“A great work, a sublime destiny is yours!

“It is your destiny to claim the Golden Medal; to unseal the Book of the Rosy Cross, in which are revealed the signs, symbols, and all the mysteries of the great Brotherhood—yours, to read the name of the Deliverer, and confront him with the Sword and the Dagger.

“You will read this when I am dead, after the Revelation of the Sealed Chamber, with its unrelenting Curse, has passed from your soul, and left your heart serene, your arm nerved and free for the accomplishment of your great destiny.

“When you are worthy, you will discover the Golden Medal, which bears the Symbol of the Globe, the Cross, and the Rising Sun.

“When your soul is calm, you will learn the truth—then, at the feet of the Imprisoned, you will discover the D——.

“I have often told you, my Son, that the cause of my departure from Germany, was a vision which rushed upon my eyes, while bending over the body of your mother, in the vault of the castle, which rises above the Rhine. I heard the voice of God; it bade me go forth into the solitudes of the New World, and await the coming of the Deliverer.

“This was the truth, Paul, but not all the truth.

“After you have read the Revelation of the Sealed Chamber, you will be able to determine how far the Curse,—the Doom—or shall I say, the Malady—of our house and race, shaped my purposes, and urged me to become either a Wanderer upon the face of the earth, or a nameless Dweller in the solitudes of a trackless wilderness.”



"And yet, aided by the REVELATION OF THE SEALED CHAMBER, you will not be able to arrive at the whole truth, until you have read the Manuscript of Brother Anselm.

"Even then, another word is needed. Listen, my Son.

"While absorbed in the mysteries of the Divine Prophecies, about the year 1755, I first acquired the friendship of Brother Anselm. He was then a very aged man. He had been present at the convocation of the Brotherhood recorded in the Manuscript, and he was one of the seven.

"He was, indeed, the only one living in 1755. He was the last of the Seven appointed by the Peasant, who was elected Supreme Chief at least a century before he assumed the name of his dead Master, calling himself Louis Bonaparte.

"The Supreme Chief had been dead many years, when I first met Brother Anselm. That aged man, who had lived far beyond the common term of human life, was the only remaining guardian of the Sacred Symbol.—You will find his name written in the manuscript, as the German Serf.—

"By him I was initiated into the Brotherhood; and at his feet I learned the symbols, the ceremonies, and the universal language of the Rosy Cross.

"At the time of the *great calamity which befel our house*—you have read of it in the Revelations of the Sealed Chamber—Brother Anselm pointed to the New World, as the place appointed for the next Convocation of the Chiefs of the Rosy Cross. There the Deliverer would appear, who was to re-create the New World, and thus prepare it for its imposing share in the regeneration of the human race. This Deliverer was foretold not only by the Prophecy of the Rosy Cross, but also by the Revelations of St. John.

"Sick of the Old World,—horror-stricken by the calamity which befel our house—wishing to save you from the Destiny, or the Malady of our race—I listened to the persuasions of Brother Anselm. I came to the Wilderness with you and Catharine; accompanied by the Venerable Anselm, and two other brethren of the Rosy Cross, Joseph and Immanuel.

"I vowed to Brother Anselm a solemn vow, as I have told you before, that you should be educated in solitude, afar from the world, so that you might take the Oath of Celibacy, and thus be prepared not only to become a Brother of the Holy Cross, but its Supreme Chief. Not only the Guardian of the Deliverer, but the Regenerator of our Order, and the embodied Destiny of the human race.

"The solemn Convocation of the Chiefs will be held in June, 1777—on the last night of the second week.

"It may be, that the hand of death, the canker of disorganization, have been terribly at work to crush our Brotherhood. It may be, that those

innumerable Circles, which, at the time of the last convocation, were scattered over every land in the Globe, and yet connected with each other by a mysterious bond of union, have suffered their ritual to decay, their ceremonies to degenerate—the great bond of Union itself, which was once a belt of iron, to fall to pieces like a rope of sand.

“It is even possible, that on the last night of the second week in June, 1777, while you await the coming of the Chiefs, in the appointed place, not a single one will appear. Yes, the tradition which commanded them to meet, may have been lost in the mists of time, and the clamors of battle, and the changes of circumstances.

“Even in that case your Destiny is still glorious. For then the Golden Medal will be yours, and by virtue of the last testament of Brother Anselm, (contained in the Book of the Rosy Cross,) you will become the Supreme Chief of the Brotherhood.

“This Medal, combined with the symbolic knowledge which you will derive from the Book of the Holy Cross, will give you entrance into all other secret organizations on the face of the globe, and with the right of entrance will come the power to command.

“For the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross is not only superior in symbolic knowledge to all other secret organizations, but, in truth, all these organizations, however styled, are but illegitimate branches of our great order. For example—that which is taught dimly among the Masonic Fraternities is fully revealed in the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross.

“Behold your destiny, my son—weigh it well—ponder long on every minute detail of your great work.

“In order that you may become the Supreme Chief and the Regenerator of the Brotherhood, you must first sacrifice at its holy altar, every thing like the ambition of the world, or the love of woman.

“As the Supreme Chief, your name will not be known in history. You will be lost to the sight of the world. You will, in truth, stamp your almost supernatural impress upon history, and sway like a Destiny the fate of nations—of mankind. But as an individual, as a man, you will not be known. Cut off from all ties of friendship or of love, sacred and set apart from the ambitions or the fears of common men, you will fulfil your awful task, glide away, and leave your work, but not your name or your memory, to tell that you ever had an existence.

“This is one side of the picture, Paul. Look upon the reverse of the medal.

“Reject the mission which is offered you. Go forth into the great world, determined to war, to conquer, to love and to hate, to gather gold and scatter it again, like common men.

“What will be the result of a course like this? I do not prophesy, Paul, nor pronounce a Judgment; I simply address your reason. The result then, is not very difficult to determine. Rejecting the great mission

for the ambitions of common men, you will undoubtedly acquire fame, rank and gold. You will be loved by many beautiful women, and feared by many powerful men. Your wildest ambition may be gratified; you may place your foot upon the highest step of that golden staircase, which, the old fable tells us, leads ever upwards, before the eyes of the ambitious.

"And what will be the end of all?"

"The men whom you trust will betray you. The woman whom you love may prove false. Worse than all, and most to be dreaded of all judgments, *she may bear a child which will inherit the horrible Destiny, the incurable Malady of our race!* The gold which you win, may only serve to poison your blood with the fever of luxury. The highest step of the golden stairway—even if you attain it—may only reveal to you a yawning chasm at the other side. A chasm that seems fathomless, and yet not deep enough to bury your despair, when you reflect on *what you are*, as a Man of the hour—on *what you might have been*, as the Regenerator of the Brotherhood, the Destiny of a World.

"You will read this when I am dead.

"From the grave I speak to you. Choose, my son, and choose with freedom, for my death removes from your head the Curse of our race.

"YOUR FATHER."

Paul sank on his knees and clasped his hands. The manuscript fell beside him, among the grass and flowers.

"Father!" he cried, raising to heaven a face which was softened in every feature by a holy serenity—"My choice is made! Now, that thy bones are dust, the fatal secret of the Sealed Chamber can no longer cloud my soul, and urge my arm to that most terrible deed. I am indeed free! Free! My choice, then, is made at once! I will sever from my heart all ties of human ambition—I will sacrifice the love of woman, at the altar of this holy work. No child shall ever be born, to struggle as I have struggled, with the Curse—the Curse of our race.

"Father! By thy spirit I swear to accept the destiny which thou didst design for me. I will become the Regenerator of the Brotherhood—I will hover round the Deliverer, his safeguard if he is true, his executioner if he is false. Thanks, Father! Thy words have removed the Curse from my soul."

It was an impressive sight to see him kneeling there, his eyes flashing with the joy which flooded every avenue of his soul, his forehead radiant with a holy energy, his voice breaking full and deep upon the breathless stillness of the forest.

At last, after the agony of years, the cloud was lifted from his soul.

Neither the secret of the Sealed Chamber, nor the love of that beautiful girl, who tempted him to break his oath, could now sway him aside from his great work.



After the first outburst of joy, Paul fell into a profound reverie.

Where was the Golden Medal? Where the Book of the Rosy Cross? What was that word which terminated the enigmatical sentence—"At the feet of the Imprisoned you will discover the D——." How should he acquire the meaning of that word, the hidden truth of the whole sentence?

These queries agitated his mind; but amid all his uncertainties a profound gladness nestled in the depths of his heart, when he reflected that—his father dead—the Secret of the Sealed Chamber could threaten him no longer, with its foreboding of thrice-infamous crime.

And yet these queries must be answered ere he had a right to read the Deliverer's name.

While Paul was absorbed in this profound reverie, the shadows gathered darker around the old Block-House, and the stillness of the forest grew deeper.

It was a beautiful thing to see those masses of deep shadow and vivid sunlight rest together upon the roof of the Block-House, like strange birds, whose immense wings, of midnight blackness, were streaked with feathers of shining gold.

And while the shadows deepened and the forest grew more breathlessly still, Paul remained on his knees, his hands resting on the oaken bench, while the manuscript lay near his side.

"To night is the seventh night of the second week of June, 1777—" he murmured aloud.

Was it sleep that came over his senses—bewildered as they were by the sudden joy—or did only his profound reverie deepen into a waking dream?

For some time, he remained unconscious of all external sights or sounds—his soul was wrapt within itself—the images of the secret Brotherhood, the words of his father, possessed his brain.

After some time had elapsed, he started from this reverie, like a man waking from a dream.

There was a lily in his right hand—a beautiful flower, with its snowy cup still sparkling with the diamond dew. Paul gazed upon it with indescribable wonder—inhaled its delicious fragrance, and pressed it to his lips.

Then glancing to the right and left, he sought to behold the giver of this fragrant blessing. There was no one in sight—all was silent and shadowy about the Block-House.

"It seems to have fallen from Heaven!" he cried, pressing it once more to his lips.

Paul started to his feet; the sun was hidden behind the trees; his beams flashed among the huge trunks like arrows of tremulous gold.

It was the hour of sunset.

At once Paul remembered his promise to Reginald, and his vow to sever from his heart all ties of friendship or love.

"I will see him for the last time,—tell him the story of my life,—and then, still brothers in heart, we part for ever!"

He hastened toward the gate,—but suddenly paused ere he advanced five paces.

"It is my duty to remain. The Golden Medal—the Book of the Brotherhood—the name of the Deliverer—these all demand my earnest thought. And to-night is the seventh night of the second week in June! But Reginald—he has been a brother to me—ah! I will see him, and return within the hour!"

He turned his face from the door of the Block-House, and once more hastened toward the gate. His step was buoyant, his manner joyous, his face full of bloom, his eye lighted up with new fire.

Again the lily which he grasped met his eye.

"A good omen!" he cried, and hurried through the gate.

Near the sycamore tree, he paused for an instant, still holding the lily in his hand.

"It is very near sunset, and I cannot reach the appointed place in time, if I follow the windings of the Wissahikon. There was a path which led directly to the south-west; I remember it well!"

To follow the windings of the Wissahikon, until he reached the Blasted Pine, was to traverse a distance of at least two miles. The direct path, leading through the woods and fields, was scarcely a mile in length; it encountered the Wissahikon near the Schuylkill. After a moment's hesitation, Paul determined to take this path.

Turning his face toward the west, he sought earnestly among the leaves and shrubbery for traces of the path, but his search was in vain.

"It is very near sunset, and I will be too late!" he cried, in despair, and at once, with his face turned toward the south-west, plunged into the mazes of the thickly grown brush-wood. His way was choked by branches of trees, interwoven with the foliage of the laurel, which covered the ground, between the trunks of the oaks and pines; plunging deeper into the gloom, without a ray of light to break the depth of shadow, he still endeavored to keep his face toward the south-west.

At last he came upon an open space, where there was a carpet of moss, sprinkled with flowers, and framed in the trunks of huge beechen trees.

A gush of sunlight warmed the place, and Paul, at the same instant, beheld the lily, which he had not ceased to grasp for a moment, and the entrance of the path for which he was seeking.

The sunlight shone warmly over the pure white flower, and Paul could not turn his eyes away from its beautiful cup, tinted as it was by golden beams.

"Where did I obtain this flower?" he murmured, as he paused in the centre of the glade, his dark attire and impressive countenance shown distinctly in the sudden sunlight.

Had he gathered it in his slumber? There were no flowers like it in the vicinity of the Block-House. Perchance it had been left upon the oaken bench by some wayfarer. And yet its fragrance was still fresh; the dew sparkled in diamond drops upon its petals.

Paul stood very still, in the rays of the sun, his countenance shadowed by thought.

This incident of the lily, which he had found in his grasp, when awaking from his reverie—or his slumber—excited a train of strange emotions.

“It has been placed in my hand by a living being; some unknown friend has stolen to my side, as I was lost in thought, and dropped it gently upon the oaken bench. Some unknown friend!”

Paul pressed his hand upon his forehead; a sudden ejaculation was forced from his lips, by a vivid thought.

“Catharine!” he exclaimed—“she lives! Yes, even as I knelt by the oaken bench, she has stolen to my side, pressed her kiss upon my forehead, and left this flower in my hand, as a token of her love. It is indeed a beautiful symbol of a sister’s love.”

The thought filled him with a sudden joy, but the joy was linked with an inexplicable horror.

“Catharine is living, and—my father—is he still living?”

He felt the cold moisture upon his forehead at the thought.

For with that thought all his madness came back again. His dread of the Sealed Chamber and its Revelation, his Remorse at the memory of that fatal night.

But the level rays of the sun, shooting over the sod, reminded him once more of his promise to Reginald.

He hurried onward, entering the hidden path, as he dashed aside a beechen branch whose foliage swept his face. But no sooner had he entered the path, than his steps were arrested by a sight which at once enchained his eyes.

On the right of the path there was an open space, but a few yards square, encircled by a rudely constructed fence. That open space was surrounded by the great trunks of chesnut, oak and poplar, but their branches parted above it, and suffered the sunlight to fall upon it, like a smile of golden rays.

There was a gentle elevation of sod in the centre of the space, encircled by the fence, surrounded by the great trees, and blessed by the golden rays. A gentle elevation—a mound of moss, whose dark green surface was only varied by a solitary wild rose, whose leaves were touched with perfect bloom. Beside the rose, was the broken stalk of another flower.

Paul glanced upon the broken stalk, and then upon the flower which he held in his hand; an irresistible conviction rushed upon his soul.

“It is the stalk of the lily which I hold in my grasp,” he cried, “and I am looking upon the grave of Catharine!”



Won by the strange beauty of the place, he leaned against a tree, and gave his soul to the influence of the golden atmosphere which invested that lonely grave.

It was a very pleasant spot for the sleep of the dead : there, in the bosom of the wild forest, among the giant trees, with a little sunshine to bless the place, and a solitary rose blooming over the grave

Paul could not turn his eyes from that lonely mound, framed in a rude fence, and with a single flower upon its green bosom.

There was no stone to mark the spot, no elaborate inscription, to tell whose ashes slumbered there.

In truth, it seemed as if the dead were left alone to the eyes of the Angels—perchance—alone with the tenderness of God.

“It was no human hand that placed this flower in mine !” the thought crossed the mind of Paul—“It is a good omen, sent to me from the Other World !”

And he knelt there, and spoke the name of his Sister to the still air, and in his dreamy way conversed with the dead.

As his clasped hands rested upon the rude fence, his yearning eyes were fixed immovably upon the grave, and the sunlight touched his forehead, his waving hair, as with a blessing, while his form was lost in shadow.

O, beautiful, upon the cold bosom of a desolate world, blossoms that holiest flower, living when all beside is dead, blooming on, when every hope is cold and withered—that flower which angels plant, and the smile of God nourishes into life—a Sister’s Love !

Paul could not restrain his tears. He suffered them to flow freely. There was no one to witness them but Heaven,—and perchance the Spirit of his dead sister was hovering in that sunlight, near the solitary rose, which trembled on the bosom of the grave !

And Paul forgot every thing—the Past and the Future, his Remorse and his Hope—as he gazed upon his sister’s tomb. Forgot every thing, and felt his soul filled with an unutterable yearning to sleep there, beside her, and be at rest, with some sunshine and a stray wild flower over his ashes.

At last, the Lily which he grasped—that flower which had been sent to him by a supernatural hand—called him back to life.

“It is a good Omen,” he said, once more—“It tells me to bury the Past, and look forward to the Future !”

He arose, and in a moment had passed from the quiet grave into the shadows. Yet ere he went, he lingered for a moment on the verge of the glade, turning his eloquent eyes over his shoulder, as he exclaimed :

“Catharine ! Catharine ! There may be women in the world, with lovelier faces than thine, but never—never lived a truer spirit ; never was

the divine tenderness of a Sister's love embodied in a countenance more angel-like than thine."

He turned away with a shudder. With the image of his sister, arose another image of a far different nature. A woman's face, shaded by raven hair, with the fire of a maddening passion shining in her large dark eyes!

It came with the memory of his sister's pale, golden hair and azure eyes; it spoke to him of the "last night" when he trembled on the threshold of the Sealed Chamber.

"She also is with the dead, that strangely beautiful woman, who with a look urged me on to Ruin. Soon I will stand upon the sod which guards her ashes. And all her mad hopes, all those desires, for which the universe itself seemed but a narrow shrine, are now hidden in a little space of grassy earth. Father—Sister—the beautiful Tempter—all dead! I am indeed alone! The friendship of Reginald alone binds me to the world. And that last tie I must sever, and say to all the common hopes and ambitions of mankind, farewell. When I am indeed alone, I will be prepared to enter upon my solemn Destiny."

Paul plunged deeper into the shadows of the forest.

The path which he followed, wound into the wildest recesses of the Wissahikon. Now its traces were almost lost amid rude forms of rock, which, scattered among the trees, seemed like the fragments of some hill of granite, and again it skirted a rill whose waters were concealed by wild grass, while the willows bending over it, shut out the light of the sun.

Emerging from the wood, he beheld an undulating field, stretching far to the west, and clad in vivid green. It was a field of clover, ripe for the scythe. Not far from the wood, a bold elevation was marked against the western sky. Paul pursued his way through the clover, and in a few moments stood upon a rock, which crowned this elevation.

Looking to the east and south, he beheld the forest extending in the form of a crescent.

That crescent marked the course of the Wissahikon.

Beyond the tops of the trees which formed this crescent, he beheld a broad green hill, on whose summit frowned a grove of pines. Amid their deep shadows, he beheld the walls of a mansion—it was the mansion of Isaac Van Behme.

Paul trembled at the sight, and at once, the memory of the beautiful woman bewildered his soul.

"It looks sad and desolate!" he said, gazing upon that distant grove of pines—"I soon will discover her grave among those shadows."

Turning his gaze farther to the west, he saw a white form, gleaming dimly from a clump of magnificent trees, clad in the luxuriant foliage of June.

"The Blasted Pine!"

And then, gazing over the clover field, he beheld, at its western extremity, a farm-house embosomed among orchard trees.

Over its steep roof, the disc of the setting sun was only half-visible. A cloudless sky, a field of clover, a farm-house embosomed among orchard trees, and a forest extending in the form of a crescent,—all illumined by the sun, whose broad disc was half-concealed by the horizon.

This was the view which Paul beheld, as he stood on the rock, with his soul still awed by the shadow and the silence of the forest, which he had only a moment left.

It was a beautiful sight—the Ideal of rural beauty,—ranged side by side with the dark old forest, whose profound solitudes overwhelmed the heart with thoughts of wild grandeur.

“I have but to descend into the valley of the Wissahikon, cross the stream by means of the rocks, and in a few moments I will stand at the foot of the Blasted Pine. But I must hasten my steps, for the sun is half-concealed by the horizon.”

Paul stood upon the rock, and surveyed the scenes of his life.

We have, indeed, wasted pages without a purpose, and expended words in vain, if we have not succeeded in impressing the mind of the reader with the peculiar strength and genius of an organization like that of Paul Ardenheim. He was one of those natures which, indeed, do not often appear in the lower world—natures made up of Good and Evil in large proportions, and swayed to either side by the hand of Fate, or perchance the accident of the merest circumstance.

While engaged in the old records, which tell of his life, we have found it difficult to avoid loving this strange man, and admiring his genius, despite his wayward Destiny. Under other circumstances he might have become a Poet, a General, or the Dictator of a Revolutionary age. As it was, he only hovers over the page of history, a vague shadow, that may appear an Apparition of Good, or the Ghost of Evil, according to the vision of the spectator.

Had he been reared amid the scenes of every-day life, accustomed to those vulgar realities which chafe enthusiasm into dull but practical energy, he would doubtless have made his mark upon the age, a stern, rugged, but powerful Man. Had he, from infancy, grown up amid scenes of cold, unpoetical Want—habituated to all that the direst extreme of poverty can inflict upon the child of the poor—with here and there a ray of education gleaming in upon the squalor and nakedness of his existence—he might, yes, he would have found a rugged joy in battling against his fate, and in striking a way for his genius, even through the wilderness of Hunger, Temptation and Wretchedness.

But his education was altogether different. He had been reared in the profound solitudes of an almost untrodden forest. His mind had been fashioned amid scenes of the wildest grandeur. The lessons of fanati-



cism, mysticism—or superstition,—which he had received from his father, seemed embodied again in the stillness of the awful forest, through whose depths the stream of Wissahikon, like a spirit, sung its unceasing song—in the glory of sunrise, when the tops of the trees were touched with gold, and the last star trembled ere it faded into air—in the majesty of sunset, when the green meadow and the dark woods lay side by side, mellowed by the same ray—in the profound shadow which came down at night upon the scene, wrapping the stream and the leaf, the cavern and the flower, in its bosom, as the pall shuts in the dead.

He had been reared alone—set apart from mankind—and yet, every moment of his life, in close and awful companionship with the Other World.

It will be seen at a glance, that this kind of education rendered his nature at once sensitive and fearless. He united—says the old MSS.—the tenderness of the woman, with the single-heartedness of the child, and the iron strength of one of those Demi-Gods of ancient story. His mind was susceptible of the most delicate shades of impression; the ten thousand voices of external nature were intelligible to his dreaming soul; he found connecting links between this world and the other, in the innumerable forms of creation; as well in the humblest plant or flower, as in the lone majesty of the silent stars.

It will also be remembered, that the supernatural part of this work, or that which appears supernatural, and which in some cases we have endeavored to explain, does not, in the Original Records of Paul Ardenheim's life, admit of doubt or speculation. The author of those Records believes in all that partakes of the Supernatural. He sees nothing improbable in a direct, continual and intelligible communication between this world and the Spiritual World, between disembodied Spirits and actual men and women.

He beholds in Paul Ardenheim, not so much a Man, born to eat, drink, sleep, toil and die like the herd of mankind, as a Spirit from the Other World, embodied in human form, and sent hither to work out a strangely terrible Destiny.

Perchance—(this is the language of the Ancient MSS.)—the Spirit of some great Man, who lived in far distant ages of the world, returned to earth again in the body of Paul Ardenheim.

Even while we smile at what we esteem the Credulity of this Writer of the Original Records, and treat all supernatural appearances, and the long train of thoughts which they involve, as idle delusions—vainer, indeed, than a Lawyer's honesty, or a Priest's sincerity—we must also remember, the Punishment of Witchcraft forms a part of that which Blackstone calls the perfection of human reason, the English Common Law. That Lord Bacon believed in Witches, and in Wizard Craft; that Sir Matthew Hale, arrayed in the pomp of his solemn office,

sentenced "Witches" to death. That New England was deluged with blood in a war, waged by its Priests against Witches, Wizards, and Devils embodied in human form. That Cotton Mather, the author of the *Magnolia*,—a Son of the School of Calvin, worthy of his Master—held the belief in Witches, Spirits, and Apparitions, much dearer than he held the "Love one another" of the Divine Redeemer.

Indeed, it will be hard for us to find a man at all distinguished, who is not controlled in his greatest actions, by some form of belief, which teaches the direct communication between this world and the next.

Even Napoleon believed in his Destiny embodied in a Star.

Paul after a pause of dreamy thought, hurried through the clover field toward the wood, whose shadows embosomed the Wissahikon.

"Ah—I remember it well!" he cried, as some memory crossed his mind—"That spring which, half-way down the hill, bubbles up from the rocks at the foot of the chesnut tree. This path leads near it, and without pausing for a moment, I may look upon it once again, and think of other days."

He had reached the verge of the clover field. Springing over the zig-zag fence, he hurried along the firm sod, and presently entered the shadow of the woods again. The murmur of the Wissahikon was heard once more, filling the air with a low-toned and indistinct melody.

"The clump of chesnut trees is yonder. Already I behold the foliage, varied with pale golden blossoms. Beside that spring, at the foot of the chesnut trees, I spent many a happy hour in those days that can never come back again. Oh, it seems to me as if the Soul drank peace, while the lips are moistened by that clear, cold water, fresh and virgin from the caverns of Old Earth!"

Hurrying onward with renewed haste, Paul presently stood under the branches of the chesnut trees. Four hardy trees they were, starting from the sod together, their joined trunks looking like one great column, and their foliage meeting overhead in one impenetrable canopy.

At the foot of these trees, from a hollow in the rock, bubbled forth a limpid spring, with a wild flower or two bending over it, like maidens surveying their faces in a mirror. A level space of green sod spread for some paces around the spring, encircled by the thickly grown shrubbery as by a wall. It was all the same as in other days—the rock in whose hollow lay the clear water,—the flowers around—the level space carpeted with moss—and the foliage which formed the walls and canopy of this wild forest bower.

But Paul had no time to gaze upon the flowers, no time to drink from the spring, for the sun was setting, and Reginald waiting for him beneath the Blasted Pine.

With a glance, he turned away,—

"At last you have come!" said a voice.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST.

## THE INDIAN SPRING OF WISSAHIKON.

PAUL started at the sound, and turned once more toward the spring.

"I have waited for you. It is the appointed hour." Again he heard the voice.

And the figure of a man advanced from the shadows of the forest bower.

"Waited for me?" echoed Paul, gazing upon the figure of the speaker in undisguised wonder

Beside the spring stood a man of slender frame, and pale features lighted by large gray eyes. He was clad in brown velvet, with ruffles on his breast and about his colorless hands, diamond buckles on his knees and shoes. Paul looked at his pale face, and thought him sixty years of age; but when he caught the clear light of his eyes,—which now softened into azure, and now deepened into dark gray—he could not imagine, for an instant, that the unknown was more than forty years old. Around his forehead floated waving locks of pale golden hair, which seemed golden indeed, in the rays of the sun, but in the shadow, appeared touched with the frosts of age.

The appearance of this man struck the mind of Paul, at once, with a deep and peculiar interest. He was attired like a man of rank and station; his form was slender, but unbent with years; there was a singular sadness upon his features, a strange light in his eyes.

"Where have I seen that face before?" thought Paul.

"Yes, you are the one *who was to come*," said that singularly mild voice, which had arrested the steps of Paul. "Attired in black, a dress such as is worn by the students of Heidelberg, a cap with a waving plume. Every thing is just as it was described to me. Not only the dress, but the face. A face of bronze, lighted by eyes that are full of inspiration and prophecy!"

As he spoke, gazing into the face of Paul, he extended his hand. Paul took that pale, thin hand, and, unable to speak or move, shuddered as though he had encountered the hand of the dead.

"Where have I seen that face?" the question again crossed his mind—"Was it among the solitudes of the Hartz mountains.—No! no! But I have seen it before—I know not where!

"You have waited for me?" he said aloud, still pressing the stranger's hand.

"I have waited for you," calmly replied the unknown, smoothing his waving hair aside from his forehead. "*At the Indian Spring of Wissahi-*



*kon, on the last day of the second week in June, at the hour of sunset, you will behold the man who is destined to aid you in the Good Work.*' These words were spoken to me in a distant land, far over the ocean, two months ago. But I believed—and am here."

It seemed to Paul that he could not have spoken, had the salvation of his soul hung on a word.

"I have seen that face before!" again the thought flashed over his bewildered soul.

"*He will be clad in black; he will wear the dress of a Heidelberg student, and on his forehead a cap with a waving plume.*"

Paul dropped the hand of the unknown, and started back a single step.

"These were the words which I heard two months ago, in a far distant land;" continued the unknown. "Your dress was described to me, and more than this, your face. *A face of bronze, lighted by eyes that are full of inspiration and prophecy.*'—You are, in truth, the man whom I seek. You are destined to aid me in the good work."

"The good work!" echoed Paul, in a whisper.

And he looked first upon the face of the unknown, then upon the spring, the trees, the flowers, as if to assure himself that he was not bewildered in a dream.

"I have seen that face before," again the thought came—"but it was older when I saw it last. It was covered with wrinkles, the eyes were dim, and the head bowed on the breast."

"Ah, you doubt me," said the unknown, with a smile, which played over his features, cold and impassible as moonlight over snow—"Then listen to another proof. *This man, whom you will meet by the Indian Spring, has, like yourself, a great mission to fulfil—*"

Paul interrupted him with an incoherent ejaculation.

—"But his great mission and your good work are one."

The spring, the trees and flowers, the pale face of the stranger, all seemed whirling in mad confusion, before the eyes of Paul.

"*But in order to satisfy your mind, and know that he is indeed the man whom you seek,*' those were a part of the words uttered to me, two months ago—*you will address him in the language of the ancient seers. You will ask him—*"

He paused, and watched the changing face of Paul, which was pale and red by turns, with a scrutinizing glance.

"You will ask him," exclaimed Paul, unconsciously echoing the words.

"*You will ask him whether he looks forward with hope to the time when the Lead shall become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile.*"

"Ah—thou art of the Brotherhood!" exclaimed Paul, his face flushing with overwhelming joy—"Thou art sent to me to reveal the deeper mysteries of the good work—"

And he seized the small, bony hand of the unknown, and pressed it to his heart.

"Said I not so? You have a great mission—I, a good work. But your mission and my work are one. But why need we exchange signs and watchwords with each other—"

"Signs and watchwords!" echoed Paul, his mind reverting to the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross.

"Are we not of one Brotherhood? Yea, in your eye I behold the prophetic fire—your hand is destined for the holy deed!"

And then taking Paul by the hand, he led him to the spring, and said—"Let us sit beside each other, and converse about the holy work."

The memory of Reginald, and the meeting by the blasted pine, had passed from the mind of Paul. He was wrapt in the unknown. He could have listened for ever to his low, musical voice, and gazed for ever upon his pale face, which, in the passing ray, seemed touched with fire from Heaven.

"Who was it," he asked, as they sat down together on a rock near the spring, "that spoke to you, and bade you expect me at this hour?"

"Who?" echoed the unknown, his features suddenly clouded. "Are you of the Brotherhood, and yet ask *his* name? Who," he continued, in a tone of singular emphasis, as he shaded his eyes with his hand—"Who but the mightiest of the fallen?"

That pale face, with the light gleaming on the forehead, while the eyes shone brightly beneath the thin hand, impressed Paul Ardenheim with indefinable awe.

"The mightiest of the fallen?" he echoed.

"Yea, the first of the Seven who watched around the Throne before they fell," exclaimed the unknown, his voice sinking with every word—"That Spirit, so powerful in his very desolation, so grand in his ruin, whom men call by various names, Astaroth—Lucifer—"

"SATAN!" whispered Paul, with a shudder, as he shrank from the touch of the stranger.

As he spoke, the forest nook seemed to grow more breathlessly still—a ray of sunshine lingered on the brow of the stranger.

"And do you shudder at that name? Are you also bewildered by the fears of beldame Superstition? Have you not yet beheld that awful Being, clad in the majesty of a Mind, that feared not to battle with Omnipotence, and did not despair when all but Eternity was lost to him? Not the vulgar image conjured up by Priests and Fatalists, embodied in the form of an ancient satyr, with obscene body and grotesque hoof and horns. No! But the awful Spirit himself, standing, with his immortal face and eloquent eyes, before the vision of all mortals, who would grasp his immortality even at the price of his despair."

The features of the unknown were violently agitated; his eyes, changing to deep gray, flashed like lighted coals.

"Ah—I have seen that look before!" half-muttered Paul, while the blood congealed in his veins, as the vague memory rushed upon him.

"Yea—it was Satan, who, two months ago, in a foreign land, came to me, as I stood at noon-day by the shore of a dreary lake. It was Satan that bade me come to Wissahikon, and expect you beside this spring. Nay, two years and more ago, on that well-remembered night—"

Paul echoed the words, he knew not why, and felt the moisture start upon his forehead.

"On that well-remembered night, he came to me as I stood amid the ruins of a Thought, which had been struggling into birth for twenty-one years; he came, I say, and bade me take a drop of blood from the heart of a tempted but sinless maiden.

"Do this," he said, "and you are immortal. The boon for which the ancient sages sighed, the boon which the mass of mankind deem an idle fancy, is in your grasp." I obeyed. I sought the tempted but sinless maiden, I placed her unconscious form before the altar, in which the liquid of immortal life was struggling into maturity."

"And you killed her?" cried Paul. "This tempted but sinless maiden? Lured by the dream of immortal life on earth, you killed a defenceless woman, killed in cold blood that which should have been sacred in the eyes of a devil."

The features of the unknown became horribly distorted.

"No! She disappeared, even from the light of the altar. I left that cell, in which I had toiled for twenty-one years, for a moment only. When I returned, she was gone. I searched each chamber of my mansion—in vain, in vain! And then, as if to crush my despair into a despair still deeper and more terrible, I discovered that the last wreck of my wealth, the fragment of the millions which I had expended in this search, was gone. It was but a thousand pieces of gold, and yet it was all—"

He paused an instant. Paul could not turn his eyes away from his face. In a moment he seemed to grow older; his face became wrinkled, his eye vacant and dim.

"Ah! It was here, in the woods of Wissahikon, that I saw you, in other days!" he exclaimed.

But the unknown did not heed his words.

"Imagine my despair," he said, in a whispering tone, which made the blood run cold in the veins of Paul. "My gold was gone—gone the body of that sinless maiden, whose heart contained the drop of blood, which would have infused immortal life into my withered veins. Yet even in this moment I heard a cry,—I rushed from my cell—I beheld the maiden who, but a few moments before, lay a corpse beside my altar. She lived—there was bloom on her cheek—life in her young eyes—"



“And thou didst murder——”

“As I sprang forward to grasp her form, I heard his voice. That sad, terrible tone, which speaks words of deathless knowledge——”

“The voice of Satan?” cried Paul.

“The voice of Satan. He bade me leave the maiden. ‘*Hasten to your cell. Ere an hour is passed, thy desires will be gratified.*’ I obeyed. I waited—waited, sinking my nails into my flesh, with the mad infatuation which possessed me in that weary hour. At last it was over. The door of my cell opened—I uttered a cry of disappointment, as I beheld in the doorway the form of a poor Idiot, whom I sheltered in my house, in pity for his weakness and deformity——”

An ejaculation burst from the lips of Paul.

“The Idiot approached. ‘Master,’ he said—not in these words, it may be, but this was their meaning—‘A dark man bade me kill the girl. It is done, and here is what thou dost desire.’ He placed in my hands a phial; it was filled with a red liquid——”

“The blood of the murdered girl——” exclaimed Paul.

“One drop, one only, I mingled with the liquid which was concealed within the altar of my thought. The work was done. The Water of Life was mine. Ere the day had broken upon that terrible night, I drank—I become young again. Yes, I, the withered old man, with the weight of years upon my brow, I felt my blood bound with new life. The wrinkles vanished from my brow, the film of age from my eyes——”

“And the murdered maiden——” whispered Paul, as the last rays of sunlight shot through the gloom of the place.

“The deformed Idiot buried her. I knew not, cared not where. What was the sacrifice of one poor life to the accomplishment of my thought?”

And his thin lips curved with scorn, while a satanic rapture shone from his eyes.

To say that Paul Ardenheim listened to the Revelation of this unknown man with horror, with an awe too deep for words, would but imperfectly convey the truth. He was without the power of motion; the eyes of the stranger enchained him with an indescribable fascination. And the ray of sunshine, stealing into the gloom of the nook, the profound solitude, undisturbed by a sound, only served to deepen this fascination.

“A deformed Idiot!” murmured Paul, as that confused memory began to struggle into shape.

“The secret of immortal life was mine, and with it the power of boundless gold! Doth it not turn thy heart, young man? Thine eye shines with the Prophecy of a great deed, thou art formed to conquer all difficulties. With thee, in truth, ‘*Will the Lead become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile.*’ But what are all thy conquests, when death may claim thee any moment, even in the glow of thy best hopes? What are

all thy plans, when the greatest of them all is sure to terminate the same as the wish of the humblest born—at the grave?"

Paul was silent; a multitude of thoughts oppressed his soul, as the words of the stranger penetrated his ears.

"Would immortal life aid thy plans? I know not what they are, care not how sublime the mission which you cherish,—it may mount to Heaven, but it is certain to be buried in your grave. Speak! have you ever thought—not dreamed,—but thought in plain, palpable, every-day meditation, of living for ever, even on this earth?"

"We may live upon the tongues of millions, when our bones are dust—" cried Paul.

"A sound—emptier than air! What is the fame of Homer? Ha! ha! There are learned men who can prove to you that Homer never lived. Or, even the English poet, Shakspeare. The millions praise him, but what care they for his actual life? Little thought have they of his hours of hunger, suffering, and despair: now writhing under the rich man's contempt, now crouching at the door of that Lord, eager to gain a crust, in exchange for his immortal thoughts. But could Shakspeare live for ever on this earth, walking on through all ages, freed from the curse of death, growing mightier in intellect with every year, and asserting his own grandeur in the face of all time—what say you to this, my friend?"

"One living Shakspeare were worth all the dead bones of Stratford or Avon, multiplied by millions."

"There is a destiny before me," cried Paul, "which death itself cannot wither or destroy. It is my fate, not to mingle with the mass of mankind, and share in their feverish strife, but to guard the Deliverer of this land, to defend him while he does right, to sacrifice him the moment he betrays his trust."

"Does your mission, then, assume that form?" exclaimed the unknown, while a smile stole over his features, and he looked young again—"You look for a Deliverer of this land, a benefactor of the human race. Is it so? You will defend him while he does right, and sacrifice him when he betrays his trust. It is well. But suppose the hand of Death cuts you off ere your work is half-done!"

"Death," exclaimed Paul, with the prophecy of a great destiny lighting up his eyes, "Death cannot strike me, until my mission is fulfilled."

"Let us imagine that your work is done. You behold the Deliverer standing among the monuments of a liberated Nation. He has proved faithful to his trust. Your work, I say, is done. You die. After your bones are dust, this Deliverer becomes a tyrant, this land his property, the people his slaves. How then, my young friend? Where is the end of all your great thoughts?"

"But God is above all," whispered Paul, as a shade of profound melancholy came over his face.

The shadows grew darker. The last ray of sunlight was gone. Through the vague gloom, the cold water in the rock glowed with a faint ray. It was the image of a star, which shone from the blue heaven, through an interval of the leaves.

Paul, with his face buried in his hands, was absorbed in thought.

"But instead of Death, let us picture life,—" he heard the whispering voice of the unknown through the gloom. "Let us admit that the New World is destined to become the theatre of great deeds, the land of demigods, the domain of regenerated millions. I will even confess that such thoughts have visited my dreams! Well—you, the guardian of the Deliverer, do not die; your work does not end with a brief score of years. You live; you become the Guardian, not of one man, but of a People; your life keeps pace with their glory, and your deathless arm turns aside the evils which menace their freedom.

"Five hundred years from this hour, you may stand upon this spot, and behold, not a wild desert of crag and forest, but a great temple, reared without the aid of one enslaved arm, but reared by freemen, and dedicated to the Brotherhood of Man!"

That word struck a hidden chord in the heart of Paul.

"You are, then," he said, gazing upon that face, which was rendered more impressive by the twilight gloom, "a Brother of the Rosy Cross?"

"A Brother of the Rosy Cross?" echoed the unknown.

"Yes—a Brother of that vast Brotherhood, whose history stretches back into the daybreak of the world, and whose girdle of union encircles the globe."

Still the unknown murmured, with a vacant accent,

"The Rosy Cross?"

"Did you not speak of the blessed day when the Lead should become Gold, and the Sneer be changed into a Smile?"

"It was the language of the Ancient Seers, who, like me, pursued the great secret of eternal youth," said the unknown, and then added in a whisper—"The Rosy Cross! Do you speak of that order so often spoken of in history, but never described—the Rosicrucians?"

"Even so," whispered Paul.

"Know then that the Founder of the Order, Rosencrux himself, who gave it name, was a Seeker after the Great Secret. Nay—'tis said that he died in possession of the secret, and embodied it in a book, known in olden tradition as the Book of the Rosy Cross."

Paul felt his heart swell, while his blood leaped in his veins. Still disguising his joy, he glanced around the covert—looked into the face of the unknown—and said calmly:

"You are mistaken, my friend. Rosencrux was born some three thousand years after the foundation of the Order. Therefore it could not



have taken its name from him ; as well might we suppose St. Peter to have taken his name from the great Church erected to his memory, at Rome."

He paused : the unknown did not reply.

"Ah," whispered Paul, "The Book of the Rosy Cross ! Could I but obtain it—the Manuscript of Brother Anselm spoke of a day when man might become immortal !"

And, like a new world, unclosing its shores and meadows, its woods and mountains to the eyes of a Discoverer, widening every moment, and revealing new beauties as it expanded on the view, that Thought dilated before the Soul of Paul Ardenheim.

Immortal life on earth ! Youth that cannot wither—Hope that cannot die !

He rose and paced the sod, while the unknown rested his cheeks between his hands, and gazed upon the bronzed face, which every moment revealed new emotions.

"You drank the draught of eternal youth—" said Paul, his mind still dwelling upon the Prophecy embraced in the Manuscript of Anselm.

"I drank, and on the instant twenty years were lifted from my frame. For you will remember that in my search after the great secret, I had grown prematurely old. Though but sixty years of age, I looked and felt at least seventy—had, in thought and care, lived an hundred. No sooner had the liquid passed my lips than I felt like a man of forty-eight years ; in the very prime of mature manhood."

"And now—" said Paul, still pacing to and fro.

"I went abroad. With renewed youth, came the secret of boundless gold. I arranged magnificent plans for my new Destiny—and—two months ago, HE appeared to me again. 'The liquid which thou didst drink was mingled, in some degree, with immortal essence, but not altogether impregnated with its spirit. The drop from the maiden's heart had lost a portion of its power, ere it came into thy possession. Wouldst thou live an hundred years, before another trial of thine energy is demanded ? Then rebuild once more thy furnace, and mingle with the liquid, not one drop merely, but three drops, each taken from the heart of a human being, who is beloved to idolatry by a Child, a Father, a Lover or a Woman !'

"I heard and shuddered before the Awful Spirit, who appeared to me at noonday by the bank of a dreary lake.

"'And if I do not obey ?'" I faltered.

"'Then,' said the Chief of the Seven, 'thy life is near its close. Thou didst number sixty years when the liquid became thine. Sixty-two years was the term of thy natural life. The draught, imperfect as it was, lifted the burden of many years from thy soul, clad thee with new manhood, *yet it could not increase the number of thy years..* 'Thou art still subject

to death at any moment, *after the two years* (counting from the time when the draught was thine) *have expired.*' "

The voice of the speaker faltered, and died away at last in a husky murmur.

Startled by the sudden pause, Paul turned abruptly, and even through the shadow, saw the face of the unknown, frightfully agitated and bathed in tears.

He drew nearer, examining the distorted countenance with an earnest gaze.

"And then—" he exclaimed, bending down, as if to hear the answer, but in reality, to gaze more closely into the face of the unknown.

There was no answer.

Paul started back with a shudder.

"He has grown twenty years older in a moment," the thought forced itself upon his mind.

"And, then we conversed together, concerning the great secret, the ways of life and death, until the shadows of night came darkly over that lake, which was gloomy at noonday."

"Thou didst converse with the Fiend?" cried Paul, starting back as he felt his blood chill.

"The Fiend! You still nourish these idle superstitions! Fiend! Does not the Religion of the Church make of him, a God; second only to the Divine Source of Life himself? Not with the Fiend, young sir, but with the Friend. Oh, had you but seen the dread mystery of his face, or heard the bewildering music of his voice, as he spoke of past ages, ranging all centuries and races before my face! At last he bade me return—"

"Return?" said Paul, as the changed face of the unknown brought back, in more distinct shape, the memory of other days.

"Bade me return, and meet you here," continued the unknown in a faltering voice. "*At the Indian Spring of Wissahikon, on the last day of the second week in June, you will behold the man who is destined to aid you in the Good Work. He will be clad in black; he will wear the dress of a Heidelberg student, and on his forehead a cap with a waving plume. A face of bronze, and an eye full of inspiration and prophecy.*" These were the words, and thou canst aid me—"

The unknown rose, and confronted Paul in his hurried walk to and fro.

"Thou," he continued, fixing his eyes upon the face of the Dreamer—"Thou, and thou only. Refuse—and I am lost. In a few days I will be dead. My secret dies with me. That secret can aid thy plans,—can change the mortal into the deathless, and give into thy hands the destiny of ages—"

"How shall I aid thee?" cried Paul—"I am young. Have but one

friend in the world. I am poor—I cannot call one piece of gold my own—”

“With thy brain,” said the unknown; “with thy arm!”

His tone was strangely elevated. He laid his hand upon the arm of Paul, who shrunk unconsciously from the contact.

“My arm? My brain?”

“The fire is lighted in my altar. The liquid which is to impart deathless youth, already hovers above the flame. To mature that liquid into the immortal essence, I demand—” his voice fell, and the hand which touched the arm of Paul, trembled violently—“three drops of blood, each taken from the heart of a human being, beloved to idolatry by a Child, a Father, a Lover, or a Woman—”

“You demand of me three human lives!” cried Paul, falling back, cold and horror-stricken.

There was a pause.

The star sparkled in the spring, and through the stillness the Wissahikon’s murmur came gently up the hill.

“And in exchange for three lives, I will give you the power to confer happiness on the whole human family.”

The voice of the unknown scarcely rose above a whisper.

“Three murders!” Paul spoke with an accent of unfeigned horror.

“Three Sacrifices offered at the altar of Destiny, in exchange for the freedom of America,—the Brotherhood of universal man!”

“Three blows with the knife or sword upon the images of God, enshrining immortal souls!” continued Paul, as he retreated a single step from the unknown.

“Does not your religion teach that *‘without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins?’* Does not all history confirm the sentiment, and build it up into a Fact, immovable as the Universe itself? For these three lives—say that they shall be the lives of the three best and purest beings on the face of earth—you will receive the Power to sweep war, pestilence, the inequalities of condition, the imperfections of physical organization, and all attendant evils from the world, and thus bring on the day of Human Brotherhood. You will acquire deathless vigor; and, with your brain, to live, is to sway mankind, as with the voice of a God—”

Paul made no reply.

“This Deliverer whom you expect, may join hands with Washington, the Rebel Leader, and thus continue for many years the war with the British King.”

Still Paul did not answer.

Let me make a rude arithmetical calculation for you. War in every age is the same. Count up the victims slain in all the wars, recorded by history, from the days of the Patriarchs down to the present hour. Did you ever make a computation like this? Let every man who has been



slain in battle be symbolized, not in a rock, nor in a leaf, nor even in a grain of sand, but in an atom of dust. Well—*count up the living souls, who have been butchered in battle, and you will discover that the surface of the globe, to the depth of ten feet, might be covered with their dust,—every atom of dust standing in place of a Man.*”

Paul retreated another step—the words of the unknown wrung a groan from his very heart.

“Take it to your heart, my friend. The surface of the world, the crust of the globe, for the depth of ten feet, is made up of human souls butchered in battle, and symbolized in atoms of dust.”

The unknown paused.

“This has been War. This will be War to the end of time.”

“You reason terribly,” groaned Paul,—“And in exchange for three murders—”

“Do not use the word. Does the man who shoots a friend in a duel, depriving a wife of her husband, and children of their father, call it a murder? Does the peasant of one nation, who mounts a rampart, and stabs the peasant of another nation, with whom he has had no quarrel, say a word about Murder? Does the grave Judge, who to-day hangs a man in cold blood for doing that which was a virtue yesterday, breathe a whisper of Murder?”

“And where,” whispered Paul, his pale face agitated by a frightful smile,—“and where shall I find the three victims?”

The unknown hesitated a moment ere he replied.

“The first may be found in the person of a Man, who is deeply beloved by a Friend—”

Paul trembled in every limb.

“The second—” he gasped.

“The second? Imagine a woman,—a beautiful woman, for example, who is idolized by a Lover, or Husband—”

Paul sank down, on one knee, near the brink of the spring, clasping his hands in the very intensity of agony.

“And the third—” he asked, in a hollow voice.

“Take the most beloved object that the world ever saw,” cried the unknown, as he drew near, and his face was faintly illumined by a star—  
“Take the Father,—”

“Hold!” shrieked Paul, starting to his feet, his hands clenched, his bosom swelling with the throbs of his heart.

“The Father,” said the unknown, in the same impassible tone, as Paul trembled before him, “The Father whose existence is blessed by the love of a Child—”

“No more—” and Paul, with flashing eyes, and set teeth, confronted the unknown—“On peril of your life, no more—”

Without seeming to notice his sudden agitation, or the deadly light

which inflamed his eyes, the unknown went on, in his calm, measured tone :

“In a cause like this, I would regard as nothing, the life of the Man who is beloved by a true friend—or of the Woman who is idolized by the Husband or Lover—or of the Father whose only joy is in the love of his Child—”

Paul bent forward, and as his hot breath swept the cheek of the unknown, he saw his face, and the vague memory of the Past was vague no longer.

“It is Isaac Van Behme,” he cried—“Her Father—hers ! Who has made a compact with the Fiend, and who talks of murdering the Father, beloved by an only child !”

And with that word he turned and fled.

Down the winding path, deep into the thickets, over the rocks where there was most darkness, and the twilight flung its profoundest shadow, he fled.

He did not pause as the frenzied cry of the old man came shrieking through the stillness of the wood.

He heard that cry, but the words which accompanied it, fell dull and cold upon his ear.

He only wished to fly to hide himself from the sight of the Tempter’s face, to hide himself from the fever of his own soul ; for the words of Isaac Van Behme had summoned up again the Spectre of the Sealed Chamber, and wrapt him once more in the flames of an unrelenting Remorse.

He fled.

And that cry came through the stillness, a cry deepened and prolonged as by the agony of a broken heart.

“No ! No ! She is dead,” exclaimed Paul, as he plunged through the thickly grown bushes. “A man who has stricken from his heart all human ties, cannot own a Daughter’s love. She sleeps in the grave.”

He sprang down the steep side of a dangerous rock. A single misplaced step, and his limbs would have been crushed, his brains scattered against the rocks below.

But, unconscious of any danger, save that which encircled him, as with a girdle of flames—the Memory of the Sealed Chamber—he dashed madly on his way.

Had a host of armed men confronted him with levelled rifles, and warned him back, on peril of a bullet from every muzzle, he still would have pursued his way, and rushed upon the certain death.

For he was, as we have said, unconscious of every thing in the world, save the Remorse of his own soul.

The Remorse which had been evoked from its grave, by the words of Isaac Van Behme, the father of the beautiful woman, who had tempted him to cross the threshold of the Sealed Chamber.

Plunging through the thickets, dashing from rock to rock, now sinking ankle deep in the marshy bed of some runlet, now thrusting, with a frenzied arm, the bending limbs aside, he soon reached the shore of the stream.

It lay there, in the bosom of the mysterious shadow, beautiful as a Bride, within the curtains of her marriage bed.

And this marriage couch was illumined only by a solitary light—the first star that came smiling out upon the tremulous canopy of the heavens, whose deep blue was softened into pale gold.

He did not heed the beautiful Wissahikon, trembling so softly there, at the welcome of the first star, but, leaping from rock to rock, he gained the opposite shore, and, turning his face to the west, hurried along a winding path, which now led far up into the dark woods, and suddenly came down again in sight of the wave and the solitary star.

Nor did he heed the thousand voices of the June twilight, which, perchance harsh and incongruous in themselves, came softened by distance, melting like heaven's own music on the ear.

The rude hymn of the laborer, gushing from the unclosed window of a hut, fixed upon the hill-side,—the lowing of cattle, grouped by the stream, where the willows bend their mournful heads—the voice of little children, now bursting in laughter, now sinking in murmurs—the lullaby of the mother, bending over the couch of her first-born,—the chirp of a solitary bird, swinging so lonely on the topmast branch of a tall forest tree, with nothing between its melody and heaven, but the light of the solitary star—these sounds, mingled and mellowed into one, made the music of the June twilight on the Wissahikon.

Believe me, it was a music that might have pleased your ear full as well as the trumpet note of battle, whose pauses are filled by death-groans.

For that music said, as plainly as music ever could say, that the earth was thankful to God for the glad June day, and the Wissahikon full of peace, when she saw her own star shining into her soul again.

Paul did not hear this music of the June twilight; the words of the old man were ringing in his ears. He did not see the Wissahikon, smiling beneath the ray of the first star. The Indian Spring of Wissahikon, sparkling so tranquilly in its bowl of rock, as it mirrored the face of the old man, whose pale brow shone in a solitary ray—this was the only sight which he saw, as he plunged blindly onward, now in the darkness, amid the thickly-grown brushwood, now by the water-side, beneath the ray of the evening star.

There came a dense thicket, without one gleam to light up, even for an instant, its impenetrable shadow. Through its darkness, a sluggish rill, which spread among tufts of marshy grass, and made the earth slippery and difficult to tread, sighed slowly onward, with a low, mournful murmur.



Paul entered this thicket, and fell on one knee; but, starting up again, crossed the stream, and ascended a steep hill, overgrown with stunted pines. As if guided by instinct, he never for a moment deviated from his course. The hill ascended, there came a level space, overspread with lofty trees, whose massy trunks were free from brushwood or foliage.

A white object glared between the intervals of these aged trees, with the light of the evening star playing upon its ghostly outlines.

Paul beheld it, and murmured the name of Reginald, his Friend—his Brother. Then hurrying through the trees, he beheld the white object more distinctly; it resolved itself into distinct shape, even as it stood alone amid the foliage and the twilight.

It was the Blasted Pine.

The bark had long ago been peeled from its huge trunk. Its rugged limbs, stripped of every thing like life or verdure, stretched themselves abruptly into the blue sky, above the tops of the living trees. Around its trunk the grass was withered—it stood in a circle of dead leaves, whose decay was contrasted with the moss and flowers beyond.

And at its foot, a bleak rock, stamped with the impress of a human foot beside a cloven hoof, was dimly revealed in the ray of the first star.

It need not be written, that this desolate tree, standing so lonely amid the verdure of June, was connected with many a dark tradition. The folk of Wissahikon regarded it with superstitious awe. Brave indeed was the man, who would dare to linger near its trunk after night-fall. A father had been slain by his child at its foot, in the early days of the Colony—a Pirate had been murdered there by his comrades, and his corse buried beneath the leaves, with a portion of their ill-gotten gold—an Indian maiden had been murdered by the hand of her white lover—these, and other legends of similar character, gave a peculiar horror to the Blasted Pine.

But these traditions of crime, which invested the tree with gloomy interest, were nothing in comparison with the atmosphere of terror which hovered over the bleak rock at its foot. The human foot and the cloven hoof, stamped together on its surface, were the traces left by the Enemy of Mankind, in ages long ago, when the rock itself was but a mass of clay. Even now he was wont to haunt the spot, in bodily shape, with the fire of eternal judgment lighting up his eyes, and the mark of unrelenting vengeance stamped upon his blasted forehead.

Sometimes he came in the form of a beautiful woman, who, with brilliant eyes and flowing hair, tempted the belated wanderer to barter his immortal soul for wealth and worldly power.

These legends, various and incongruous, originated, without a doubt, in some terrible tragedy of every-day life, which occurred near the tree, in long distant years.

It was at the foot of this desolate tree, upon the rock stamped with the

footprint of the Fallen Angel, that Paul Ardenheim stood, and saw the Wissahikon gleaming from afar.

It glimmered through an opening of the forest, and over its depths, a space of blue sky was seen, blushing with soft radiance, as the twilight deepened into night.

"Reginald!" exclaimed Paul, as he stood with folded arms, and head drooped on his breast—"Where art thou?—Ah, he has been here, he has waited for me, but I have not kept my word."

He was silent, for the memory of Reginald's friendship came to him, in that hour of chaotic thought, beautiful as a solitary ray, shining through the rift of a midnight cloud.

And then the silence of the spot, unbroken by the rustling of a leaf,—the gloom, deepened by the contrast of the distant stream and the dark blue sky—harmonized with his thoughts, and brought home to him the strange legends of the Blasted Pine

A vague feeling—it was awe without terror—crept over him, as he saw the human foot and the cloven hoof, impressed upon the rock on which he stood.

"Here, a father fell by the hand of his son—"

These words, spoken in a low voice, were accompanied by a shudder.

"A father by the hand of his son—" he repeated, lingering on every word, while his eye gleamed with a sombre fire.

"Here, the gold of the Pirate, every coin purpled with the blood of women and children, was buried. And the miserable wretch who dug the cavity for this gold, was murdered by his Chief, even as he stood before this rock, with the spade in his hand. The cavity for the gold became the grave of the still quivering corse. '*Thy Ghost shall haunt the place, I trow, and guard my earnings, until I return,*' said the Pirate, as he smoothed the earth and leaves over the warm corse and the chest of gold. And here, an Indian maiden, who clung to her white lover's neck, and, as she spoke of her unborn child, besought him to take her with him to his English home, and let her dwell with him for ever,—here, the dark-haired Indian girl was butchered by that lover's hand. It was before the days of William Penn, when the land, now swarming with the white race, was only trodden by a few hardy Colonists, when Philadelphia was a forest, and the huts of Germantown first began to smile in the wilderness. And the name of the Indian maid, who fell at the foot of this tree, with her unborn babe throbbing in her mangled form, became the name of the wood-hidden stream—Wissa-Hikone,—'The Lone Flower of the Spirit-Land.'

"And here, the Fallen Angel, when this rock was clay, and these hills were peopled by the beings of the antediluvian world, stamped the impress of his burning feet, as he was whirled onward by the impulse of an unrelenting vengeance.

" 'Tis said that he comes here now, at dead of night, filling the solitude with the accents of his despair, and disclosing to the star-beam that livid forehead, scarred by the thunderbolt. He comes, to tempt poor humanity to its ruin—so the traditions of the rude peasants tell. As if the desolation of his own awful soul could be cheered by the perdition of souls, inferior to him in power and despair.

" And then he often comes in a beautiful form, armed with the glance that maddens, and the tone that bewitches—encircled by all the fascinations which invest a lovely woman.

" Ah—there is in truth a terrible fact embodied in this wild tradition. Satan, clad in the gloom of his eternal anguish, can only strike terror into the gazer's heart. But Satan, incarnate in the form of a lovely woman, whose glance can plunge you into crime, whose low-whispering voice can make your heart forget its God, and your hand commit the Unpardonable Sin——"

He covered his face, for the memory of the beautiful woman, who had tempted him to cross the threshold of the Sealed Chamber, flashed suddenly upon his soul.

" I hear her voice again. Her dark hair, tossed by the winter breeze, sweeps over my forehead. Her touch fills my veins with frenzy. Through the gloom of that corridor I see her face, flushed with passion—her eyes, radiant with the daring of a soul that believes not in God or in the Hereafter, but in its own boundless Pride, dart their light into my soul."

" She is before me again," he cried, raising his agitated face, and spreading forth his arms. " Before me now—between my sight and the blue sky—beautiful as she was on the *last night* when she tempted me to despair."

At this moment, his convulsed features were illumined by a faint and lurid ray. Above the dark mass of the western woods, appeared a crescent of pale gold, distinctly defined against the deep blue sky.

It was the new moon, trembling over the woods of Wissahikon, like a coronet of light, shining above the dark hair of a beautiful woman.

Her beams invested the face of nature with a sad and sepulchral ray. The countenance of Paul Ardenheim looked wan and ghostlike in that pale azure radiance.

" But she is dead," he faltered—" Her ashes rest beneath the sod—there are wild flowers above her grave."

Was it the rustling of a leaf that trembled gently on his ear ?

That faint sound, heard for an instant and then dying without an echo, riveted the attention of Paul Ardenheim, he knew not why.

He listened with fixed intensity, but the forest was still as a tomb.

And then once more there came a sound. It seemed like a distant voice repeating his name. " Paul !" he heard—or imagined he heard—that unknown voice speaking his name, in a low accent, vague and tremulous as the murmur of a rill.



Have you ever started from a half-waking slumber, at the sound of your name, pronounced by a voice at once hollow and melodious ?

Have you felt your flesh creep, and your heart grow cold, as you discovered that the word was not spoken by human lips, but either by some fancy of your half-waking meditation,—not dream—or by an actual spirit from the other world ?

Thus it was with Paul Ardenheim, as he heard—or fancied he heard—a voice, at once hollow and melodious, repeating his name.

“ Paul ! ”

This time Paul heard it distinctly, although the sound was low, and faint, and far away.

Again that rustling sound, like the noise produced by a serpent trailing over withered leaves.

Then occurred an incident which realized the supernatural legends of the place.

Upon the rock stood or rather trembled Paul, resting one hand for support upon the trunk of the Blasted Pine, for he was faint and scarcely able to stand, and the cold moisture started from his forehead.

The rustling sound grew louder ; again the voice pronounced his name—deeper in emphasis, more musical in cadence—and a white object, like a mist hovering over a stream, began to glimmer through the trees.

“ It is Satan ! ” The thought crossed the mind of Paul, but he could not speak. His eyesight grew dim ; that white mist was whirling before his eyes ; it seemed to wrap him in its folds.

He grew cold, he trembled, he fell on one knee, and in the act of falling raised one hand toward heaven.

A hand glided from behind the withered trunk, and then an arm, fair and beautiful ; the hand pressed the hand of Paul, and the blood bounded in his veins.

No more damps upon the brow, no more ice in the veins, no more chill and shuddering awe.

For a beautiful face was gazing upon him ; a moist hand was pressing his own ; waves of flowing hair swept over his forehead, and the voice, very near, this time, and melodious as a sound from Eden, spoke his name, and the breath which framed the word, fanned his cheek.

That which he had imagined a mist, was the white robe of a beautiful form. The sound like the noise produced by a snake trailing over withered leaves, was the gentle tread of a small foot, that beat the earth with an impetuous motion.

Through the intervals of long flowing hair, which, in the gloom, and by the sepulchral light of the moon, seemed of more than midnight blackness,—through the locks of that streaming hair, he saw the voluptuous swell of a white bosom, rising in quick pulsations over a loosened robe, and felt the light of eyes supernaturally radiant, flashing, burning into his soul.

Was it a Vision—was it Reality? He knew not, he cared not, but the vision of the white bosom, the pressure of the moist hand, the dazzling eyes—the atmosphere of loveliness which invested the form, and intoxicated his senses, as with a mingling of delicate perfumes—forced his blood in impetuous currents, from his heart to his face, and fired his eyes with more than mortal light.

“It is Satan!” he gasped, and pressed the hand to his heart, and sunk against the pine, bewildered by a vague and inexplicable languor—“Satan, the beautiful!”

His voice failed him: gathering the hand to his breast, he looked upward in silent rapture.

“Paul!” the voice once more spoke his name, and pressed that name upon his mouth, with the kiss of warm lips that burned his blood.

Before we gaze upon the sequel of this interview between Paul Ardenheim and the Principle of Evil, embodied in the form of a beautiful woman, we must retrace our steps, and return to the other characters in our history. And first, Jacopo.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

### “PHILOSOPHY!”

JACOPO was a Philosopher.

In recording this important fact, we mean to do especial reverence to the large class of which he was an eminent member

To be a Philosopher, it is necessary to look upon Good and Evil as highly amusing names for different forms of the same thing. When you behold the world deformed by Evil, crimsoned with war, polluted with the deeds of a horde of tyrants, under various names, you must not complain of the Evil, nor speak harshly of the war, nor breathe a whisper against the tyrants.

You must merely say—“*Such things always have been, and such things always will be.*”

This is Philosophy.

When you see an innocent girl, hallowed by the ray of virginity, struggling for bread, and earning, by her sixteen hours of daily toil, a pittance that would not keep a rich lady in rouge for an hour, you must not speak

of a better day for the Poor Girl, nor prophesy the coming of a time, when honest maidenhood will be no longer poor—no longer subject to the cold scorn of the rich—the vulgar avarice of the task-master—the lascivious attempts of the wealthy profligate

No, sir. Gazing on the wan cheek of the Poor Girl, who works ‘the nails from her finger’s ends’ for just enough ‘to keep body and soul together,’ you must gravely exclaim—

*“Such things always have been, and such things always will be.”*

For this is Philosophy.

Or in case the Poor Girl, tired of struggling for the bitter crust, and sleeping in the damp, cold home, while the ten thousands of the rich have their banquets, their operas, their dresses of velvet and satin, their diamonds and gold—tired, I say of this hard, drear life, should listen to the offers of the Rich Libertine, and sacrifice her priceless virtue for bread, clothing, and something like a home, or perchance for the mere proposal of marriage, which is never intended to be fulfilled—you must not in this case call the Wealthy Profligate a scoundrel, worthier of the gallows than ever a Pirate that trod a bloody deck, nor should you drop one tear for Poor Virginity, suddenly wrecked into hopeless prostitution.

No, sir.

While the Rich Libertine goes to his gambling hell, and quenches the fever of his idleness in dice or cards, or, maybe—for such things are done—hurries to his Fashionable Church, and sits in his pew, with his name on the door, in silver, and subscribes large sums to Missionary efforts, for the benighted Pagans, while the Dishonored Girl, shut out from all pure, all respectable society, because the Rich Libertine bought her virtue for a Promise, has no resort but the house of infamy—you will compose yourself into a sober attitude, and with unctuous utterance exclaim—

*“Such things always have been, and such things always will be.”*

This, as I said before, is Philosophy.

Maybe you live in a Free Land, which was colonized, some hundreds of years ago, by a band of wandering exiles, who followed the hand of God, and came out from the Old World, into the virgin wilderness, and said, “Here we build an altar, sacred to the freedom of all races of men.”

A Free Land, which was admitted in the family of Nations, after a long and bloody Revolution, after many and fearful battles, after a Declaration which proclaimed to all the world, in the name of Almighty God, ‘*That all men are created free and equal!*’

May be, this Free Land, only Seventy-one years after the Declaration, is cursed by White Slavery, that hurls men and women and children in the hot air of the factory, or coffins them in the foul courts of a Large City, dooming them to coin their lives into a little bread, while the Rich Man gets all the richer for their groans and tears. Or, maybe it is deformed, —this Free Land, sanctified and set apart by God for the good of universal



man—by a Black Slavery, that sells the unborn fruit of the mother's womb, and pays a bounty for the violation of every instinct planted by the Almighty in the heart of Father, Child, Brother and Sister. A Black Slavery, that pays the expenses of chivalrous luxury, by selling wives from their husbands, fathers from their children, the baby from its mother's bosom; by trading in human flesh, as though it were meat for the shambles; by—but there are facts so beautiful in this Black Slavery, that the Devil himself would be ashamed to write them down, upon the darkest page of Eternal Torment; truths so lovely, that the Devil himself would blush to tell them to a group of listening friends.

Well; your Free Land is cursed by the White and the Black Slavery, but you must not speak reproachfully of either. You must not say that the White Slave, and the Black Slave, were made by the same God, and redeemed by the same Christ, as the Rich Man and Slaveholder.

No, sir.

While the White Slave swelters in the factory, giving life and lungs, breath and heart, to the rich man's coffers,—while the Black Slave (in many cases whiter than his Master) is sold in sight of your Capitol, and manacled and lashed, beneath the same Flag which floated over Washington at Yorktown, you must compose yourself, and utter the calm remark—

*"Such things always have been, and such things always will be."*

Again; this is Philosophy.

As we gain some knowledge of the nature of Philosophy, we may also form some idea of the character of the Philosopher.

He is one of the most estimable characters in the world. No wrong—committed on others—can discompose his steady nerves, no outrage—perpetrated on his neighbor—can shake the calm serenity of his soul. In Turkey he is a great admirer of the Grand Turk; in Russia he loves the Autocrat; in England he speaks with proper serenity of the starvation of some millions of Irishmen; in Timbuctoo he greases his face, and shouts hosanna to a God who, embodied in a reptile, is worshipped by rattling pebbles in a calabash; in America, he speaks respectfully of Slavery, either Black or White, and in Thibet he considers the Grand Llama a very respectable personage indeed.

Some hundreds of years ago, the Philosopher spoke with great contempt of certain vulgar Fishermen and Peasants, *'who turned the world upside down,'* by a silly doctrine about the Brotherhood of Man, the Gospel of the Poor, and other doctrines as vague and imaginary.

The sum and substance of the Philosopher's belief is comprised in a few quaint maxims. *'Such things always have been, such things always will be.'* *'Tis the way of the world.'* *'Take the world as it comes.'*

The last, *'Take the world as it comes,'* is a sovereign excuse in the eyes of the Philosopher for every deed known in the calendar of Crime.

The Seduction of a Poor Girl by a wealthy Libertine—the murder of a Poor Man, in the fetid atmosphere of the Factory, by the Capitalist—the robbery of Widows and Orphans by the wealthy Bank Director—the selling of the babe from its mother's bosom, by the chivalrous slaveholder—these incidents, and all others of like calendar, are chaptered in the Philosopher's mind under one head, to wit; "TAKE THE WORLD AS IT COMES."

So glorious a thing is Philosophy.

So magnanimous and so entirely great is the Philosopher.

Jacopo was a Philosopher.

We shall endeavor to maintain and illustrate this point in the present chapter.

We left him on the threshold of the farm-house, while the Negro stood over the head of his unconscious Master, knife in hand, and a deep groan echoed from the arbor.

Jacopo pushed open the door, and entered the large room, or hall of the old farm-house.

As the light streamed in upon the gloom, Jacopo recognised the familiar features of the place. It was the scene of the New Year's festival on the last night of 1774. But the broad hearth was fireless now; it yawned black and cold, in the cheerful sunlight. The huge rafters no longer echoed the shouts of the merry-makers, nor did the floor tremble under the dancer's tread. The room was silent and gloomy; the shutters were closed, and the only light which enlivened its details, came through the open door.

That light shone over a broad oaken table, which stood in the centre of the floor.

The sight of the table brought the tears to Jacopo's eyes—

"Touching but harrowing memory! There sat old Peter, with his red nose beaming over his white beard, like a beacon over a snow-drift. Here, the turkey was placed, done to a turn too, and there the cats, which Law, Medicine, and Divinity, by a simple act of faith, transformed into rabbits. Upon this very spot, old Peter mixed—nay, mixed is a vulgar word—constructed the sublime vision of the Dorfner punch, which made us all see stars, and lifted our hearts into the regions of the Milky Way."

Jacopo was overwhelmed with tender regrets.

"Venerable table!" he cried, "I have made a Pilgrimage to thee, even as the devout of the olden time journeyed to St. Jago of Compostella! Thou shalt be dedicated to the name of St. Dorfner, of the White Beard; thy symbol, a Jug of Foaming Punch. Thy Pilgrim, a frail child of mortality, sometimes called Jacopo, who, amid all his frailties, cherishes still, in the inmost core of his heart, the memory of the Dorfner Punch—Zounds! Why did not my guardian, who had the care of my father's estate, send me to school to a Poet. Decidedly I have a genius in that way.

“When the summer day is near its close,  
And sorrows gather in—a bunch,  
Then bring the balm for mortal woes,  
And drown me in a Dorfner—Punch.”

After he had recited this extemporaneous snatch of lyric poetry, Jacopo subsided from the regions of the ideal into sober matter of fact.

“It was on this very spot that I gave the soothin’ potion to Madeline,” he said, with a cool, business-like air; “although, at the time, I did not dream of drugging the aristocracy, or even its humblest member.”

Through the gloom which hung over the place, Jacopo beheld the door which opened upon the stairway, leading into the upper rooms of the farmhouse.

“‘*Sleep in that room, Jacopo,*’ was the remark of the respectable Hopkins: ‘*search every closet. Whatever you find in the way of paper or parchment, bring to me, and your fortune is made. Be particularly careful of every thing that bears the date, November twenty-third, ’fifty-six.*’ It was very kind in Hopkins to tell me all this; but he might have had the decency to tell me, in plain terms, that a murder had been committed in this house, on that particular day; or he might have insinuated, even in the most delicate manner, that ‘*after the deed was done, the child was taken away,*’ or that ‘*Dorfner, with the corpse, also concealed certain parchments and papers,*’ et cetera!”

Jacopo glanced upon the fragments of printed paper which he grasped in his right hand, and at the same instant his slender legs shook like reeds.

“If Dorfner awakes, I am lost!” he cried, and hurried to the door—opened it—and ascended a dark stairway.

“At the head of the stairway,” thought Jacopo, “is the passage which traverses the farm-house from north to south, and at its southern end the room of Madeline.”

The darkness and silence struck the philosopher with awe. The echo of his footsteps, the very creaking of the rheumatic stairs, frightened him. Presently he stood in the passage at the head of the stairs, and in the impenetrable gloom, turned his steps in the direction of Madeline’s chamber.

“Over the hall of the farm-house, there are two rooms,” he muttered—“one is Madeline’s, and t’other, as I’ve been told, has not been opened these eight years.”

His hand touched the door of the latter chamber as he murmured these words. Jacopo was seized with a violent nervous attack.

“Madeline’s door is but a step farther,” he said, and advanced with unsteady steps through the thick darkness.

His hand—extended at arm’s length, and shaking like a weathercock on a stormy day—touched the panels of a door.

Then it was that Jacopo belied his philosophy, and shook from head



to foot, and grew hot and cold by turns. For a distinct memory of a pool of blood, upon an oaken floor, at the foot of a bed, not only possessed his fancy, but floated before his eye in the very darkness of the passage.

Gathering nerve, he placed his foot against the door; it opened suddenly, and he fell upon his face, on the threshold of Madeline's chamber.

With a curse and a groan, he raised his face, and cast a hurried glance over the room.

Through the dingy curtains of the southern window, streamed the warm sunshine, while the western window was darkened by a cloak, or some other garment, which, hung over the small leaden panes, gave passage to but a few wandering rays.

In the corner, between these windows, stood a bed, whose coverlet, soiled with dust, bore the impress of a human form.

There was a dressing-bureau of dark walnut, surmounted by a small mirror, opposite the bed, and two chairs stood against the oak panels which covered the walls. The white cover of the bureau was white no longer, for it was discolored by a thick coating of dust—the mirror was shrouded in a veil of cobwebs.

These details Jacopo comprehended at a glance, as, resting his hands and knees upon the dusty floor, he gazed nervously about him.

He arose and closed the door, and cast his eyes towards the foot of the bed. The floor was covered with dust, and yet he fancied that a dark stain marred its surface, and gloomed ominously upon him.

"'Tis just the same as I saw it on *that mornin'*, two years and six months ago! There's the bureau—the chairs—the bed—all the same as when I saw them last. I know it's peculiar. The only change that I see, is that cloak hung over the window—the window which looks out upon the chesnut tree. As for the bed—u-g-h! The print of her form is stamped upon the dusty coverlet, and—"

Jacopo advanced to the foot of the bed, and with a quivering hand brushed the dust away for the space of two or three feet.

As the thickly gathered dust was swept away, and a portion of the white oaken floor brightened in the sunshine, in the centre of that white space appeared a dark purple stain.

Jacopo sprang to his feet, as though a snake had bitten his heel.

"It's *her* blood!" he cried, and again he proved untrue to his philosophy; for the sun, shining upon his small nose, wide mouth, and inflated cheeks, revealed a visage ashy as the face of a dead man. "Hello! The closet, as I'm an honest man!" and philosophy came to his aid, and his face brightened into modest blushes.

In the corner next to the western window, appeared a solitary panel, separated from the others by an oaken frame, and reaching from the ceiling to the floor. On one side appeared some traces of a keyhole—Jacopo

swept the cobwebs away, and his mouth at once displayed its capacity in a boundless grin.

It was indeed the closet, but where was the key?

Jacopo pondered anxiously for a moment, with his finger upon the tip of his nose.

"I must force this door; but where's a crowbar? Considering all circumstances—the exigencies of the case—the fact, that if Peter Dorfner wakes up, I am a murdered man—at all events, a kicked man—the scarcity of crowbars—with other reasons, which are doubtless very good, but which do not now occur—I think that I am justified in using the hatchet which I saw on the table down stairs."

After he had come to this remarkable conclusion, Jacopo lost no time in hurrying to the door, and presently his footsteps echoed from the stairs. He was not absent longer than a minute; and when he returned, the hatchet was in his hand, and his face was enlivened by a grimace, which buried his eyes among laughing wrinkles, while it gave his mouth the outline of a loosened shoe-string.

"Now for the closet, and the mysteries," exclaimed Jacopo, as he stood on the threshold—"and, above all things, for the Twenty-Third of November, Fifty-Six!"

The hatchet fell from his hand, and clattered on the floor, while Jacopo staggered backward against the door-frame.

"The Devil!" he ejaculated, with a profound sigh, his small eyes dilating like the eyes of a cat in the dark, and his nether jaw separating from the upper.

He was seized with a violent fit of trembling; he rubbed his eyes; he pinched his thin legs; he pressed his hands upon his round paunch; he shook himself like a water-spaniel, after a bath.

"I am not dreaming!" he ejaculated.

It was very much like a dream. A braver man than Jacopo might have been frightened; a greater Philosopher than Jacopo might have been driven from his stoical composure; for it was a very remarkable sight which he saw, altogether shadowy and unreal in appearance.

In the centre of the room, near the foot of the bed, and in the light of the southern window, appeared a small pine table, standing on four rickety legs, and covered with papers and parchments. Among these papers and parchments, which had a kind of sepulchral look, being imbued with a musty odor, indicative of old chests, or suggestive of some withered lawyer's den,—among these papers and parchments, I say, appeared a pale white hand, which grasped a pen, and rested upon a broad sheet of foolscap.

That pale white hand belonged to an elderly gentleman, clad in black, as all elderly gentlemen ought to be, and seated—like a man at his ease—in an oaken chair, with unpainted arms and capacious seat

It was this pine table, this pale white hand, this elderly gentleman, which filled Jacopo with indefinable terror.

Had the pine table started from the floor, like the festival board of some goblin story? Had the elderly gentleman been summoned, by a spell, from some uneasy resting-place in some forgotten graveyard?

Jacopo could not answer these questions, but, cold with affright, leaned against the door-post, his knees shaking together, like dry sticks on a windy day.

It was a long time before he could muster courage to gaze into the face of this indefinable personage. He was writing, very leisurely, like a good merchant in his counting-house; his eyes were downcast, and he did not seem to know that there was such an individual as Jacopo in the world.

You may imagine the feelings which agitated the heart of Jacopo, as he examined, with a stealthy glance, the countenance and the attire of this Incomprehensible.

It was the visage of a man of some sixty years. The nose was long, the lips thin, the forehead broad and high, with short, stiff, gray hair, disclosing the outline of a large head. A solitary mass of his gray hair—it could not be called a curl—rested upon the centre of the brow, falling half-way down to the well-defined eyebrows. The eyes were not visible; Jacopo was every instant afraid that they would be raised, and that their glance would penetrate his soul.

The form of the stranger was marked by a broad chest, wide shoulders, and long arms. He was clad, as I have said, in sober black; a waistcoat buttoned to the throat, with a white cravat about the neck, and spotless ruffles around the wrists. His legs were crossed under the table; Jacopo beheld a diamond buckle shining on his black shoe, like a glow-worm on a piece of charcoal.

And the elderly gentleman continued writing, with the light playing over his pale forehead, while Jacopo stood trembling against the door-post. Not for a moment did he raise his eyes, nor did he manifest, by the slightest gesture, that he was aware of Jacopo's presence.

This continued for five minutes or more; the cold dews began to start from Jacopo's brow.

"It is the Devil!" he mentally ejaculated.

Still the stranger continued writing, only once removing his hand from his paper, to brush a vagrant fly from his nose. A smile began to gather about his thin lips, and widen slowly over his face, until it agitated the small wrinkles near the corners of his eyes.

"Ehem!" coughed Jacopo,—and shuddered, for he was afraid of those eyes, which he had not seen.

The unknown continued writing.

Grasping the door-post with one hand, Jacopo wiped the cold dew from



his forehead with the other, and summoned all his Philosophy to his aid. He was nerving himself in silence for a desperate effort.

"Where?"—he gasped, frightened at the sound of his voice—"Where did you come from?"

How his heart beat against his ribs, as he awaited the answer!

Yet the elderly gentleman did not raise his eyes, nor pause for an instant in his task; with imperturbable gravity he continued writing, the noise made by his pen, heard distinctly through the silence.

"Did he come in the winder?" faltered Jacopo, relapsing unconsciously into a vulgarity of expression, rather unphilosophical,—“Or through the floor? Did he bring the table in his pocket? Maybe he came through the closet? No—no, sir! It can't be. The door is still locked, and there's the cobwebs over the lock. Ugh! This goes ahead of Italy and France and Spain—never saw any thing like it in my life, not even in the great German Principality of Spitzemburschendingenflotzer, where the Devil comes dressed in breeches and flannel, and the peasants believe in Ghosts, who eat sour-kROUT.”

The voice of the unknown was heard for the first time; it was a voice as low, as sweet, as melodious as the voice of a beautiful woman; and yet Jacopo shuddered again as he heard it.

Without raising his eyes, the unknown exclaimed:

"There are two kinds of scoundrels in this world. There is the grave scoundrel, who indulges himself with magnificent villanies, and becomes glorious from the very magnitude of his crimes. The Borgia belonged to this class; at this hour, he is admired for his elaborate depravity. Then there is the petty scoundrel, who ministers to the basest appetites of the grand scoundrel, and becomes the miserable hireling of splendid baseness, selling his soul for a piece of money, and wearing his perjuries as a fop wears paste jewels. It is the life of such a scoundrel that I hold in my hand—"

"Eh!" ejaculated Jacopo.

"He is called by various names," continued the elderly gentleman, still keeping his eyes upon the paper; "and first we meet with him in the south of France, as a lay brother of the Jesuits, and known as Brother Joseph-Marie—"

Jacopo started—rubbed his eyes—picked his ears.

"Saint Beelzebub!" he groaned.

"As Joseph-Marie. The house of the Jesuits stood in a garden, half-way up a hill, whose summit commanded a view of the Mediterranean. In the valley beneath was a convent, whose white walls looked out from among vines and olive trees. Among the nuns who peopled this convent, was one, a fair and beautiful thing, who had been forced by wealthy relations to take the vow against her will, and bury all the love and freshness of her virgin heart in that living sepulchre. She was called Sister

Antonia. And in the Monastery of the Jesuits was a pale, thoughtful Father, renowned as much for his piety and eloquence, as for his youth; as much for the brilliancy of his eyes, the singular sweetness of his voice, as for the remarkable grandeur of his intellect. He was altogether a man to be loved; the very children knelt for his blessing, as he passed along the valley, and the whole country by the sea shore resounded with the praises of Father Ignatius. But he was a man, alas! with all his devotion to the Church and to his Order, there lingered wit in his bosom a spark of earthly passion, which only wanted a single breeze, to fan into a flame. He became the spiritual Director of the convent; he met with the young sister Antonia; through the dim lattice of the confessional, the griefs, the hopes, the fears of that warm heart were poured into his soul.

"And they loved—loved with a love beyond madness in intensity—and lingering together, in the shadows of the conventual chapel, the white sleeve of the nun, resting on the dark robe of the Jesuit, they said to one another, 'We will cast aside these coffins which imprison our souls. We will fly to a New World. A cabin under a hillside in the depth of some untrodden forest, shall be our refuge and our bridal home.'

"These words may have been sealed with a kiss, for the nun was altogether beautiful, and the young Jesuit felt the blood fire in every vein, as by the many-colored casement, he drew her form to his heart, and saw the light of the rising moon reflected in her eyes.—It is a long story, but they planned their escape. The night was fixed; the shallop which was to bear them out to sea, was hidden under the high crags by the shore. The night came, I say, but father Ignatius passed it in the dungeon of his Monastery, beating his forehead against the chains—and there was a lifeless form stretched in a cell of the convent, the corpse of a pale, beautiful girl. For they had been betrayed, by a wretch who overheard their plans,—who listened to their vows—who counted their kisses—as he concealed his form behind a pillar of the chapel. And that wretch was the lay Brother, Joseph Marie."

Jacopo was white as a shroud. He grasped the door post with both hands, and sank helplessly on his knees.

"Joseph-Marie, the Englishman," continued the unknown without raising his eyes, "the lay brother of the Order of Jesus, was the miserable creature, who gave these young hearts to infamy and death! Let us turn over another page of his history—"

"No! No! Do not!" gasped Jacopo on his knees, but the unknown did not heed him. "I'd a great deal rather you would n't—"

"He has changed his name. He is called Bernard; he is the favorite *valet* of a superannuated Profligate, the Count D'Arcy. Near the chateau of the Count, is the hut of an humble peasant man, whose life of slavery, is relieved by the presence of an only child—a daughter—a pure, beautiful girl, for all her peasant garb, and coarse wooden shoes. And it is Ber-

nard the *valet*, who lures this child of poverty from her father's roof, and sells her unpolluted form, into the arms of gray-haired sensualism. Oh, my good Bernard, this is another crime, for which you will have to answer some day—"

Thus speaking, while a smile agitated his thin lips, the unknown did not once raise his eyes. Jacopo grovelling on the floor, pale as death, and shivering as with an ague chill, clenched his hands, and exclaimed

"It is no man. It is n't a human being. It's the ve-r-y devil!"

And the unknown turned over another page, and resumed in his low musical voice—

"In Florence we next behold him. The companion of a young English lord, something between a Valet and a Tutor. And the young Lord loves an Italian girl, the daughter of an aged nobleman, who is as proud as he is poor. In the very earnestness of youth, in the very frankness of boyhood, our young English lord would marry this girl, and set an English coronet upon her white forehead. Who is it that poisons his heart? Who is it, that tells the young lord of a father's anger, and the sneer of the fashionable world? Who is it, that lulls the senses of the old man's child, with a drugged potion, and yields her an insensible and helpless victim, into the arms of infamy? Who but our old friend Joseph-Marie, sometimes called Bernard, and now known by the name of ———"

"Don't! Don't!" cried Jacopo, in grotesque dismay—"Upon my word this is a very peculiar state of affairs. Indeed I'm not of sufficient consequence to merit all this attention. I'd rather you would not speak of it."

"By the name of Jacopo," calmly continued the elderly gentleman, "But the basest deed of all, compared to which all other infamies are virtues,—ah! Wretch it is written here! Madeline! Madeline!"

At this word an overwhelming horror possessed the wretch who grovelled near the door. His hands were clenched, but he could not raise them from his knees; the cold dews were upon his forehead; for the first time something like Remorse arose before his Philosophic Soul.

"She was only a Peasant Girl," he cried, in broken tones—"And Reginald was in love with her—I could n't help it. *How* could I?"

It was incredible! Jacopo saw and doubted; he heard and could not believe!

This elderly gentleman, with the sombre attire and remarkable face, continued his meditations, without seeming to be aware that there was a certain round-pouched, red-nosed man, writhing on the floor, not ten paces from his chair. Much less did he appear to know, that the name of this man was Jacopo.

"Jacopo,—once called Bernard—sometime since known as Brother Joseph-Marie!" continued the elderly gentleman. "The very sublimity



of this man's baseness fills me with unutterable loathing.—What do you think of it, sir?"

For the first time he raised his eyes.

Yes, speaking in that calm, pleasant voice, with an elegant gesture of his right hand, he lifted his gaze from the manuscript—he looked into Jacopo's face.

Where his eyes dark, were they gray or blue?

Jacopo could not tell. Every thing about him was swimming in a fiery haze; a sound like the murmur of a distant cataract was in his ears. And yet, through that murmur, he heard the clear deep tones of the unknown—through that fiery haze, there came the glare of two intensely brilliant eyes, shining and turning into his very soul.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD.

### "THREE LETTERS!"

"WHAT do you think of it, sir?"—again that voice.

"I don't know," cried Jacopo, as he grovelled on the floor, wiping the streaming perspiration from his red face—"I hardly know—what—to think—"

The unknown rested his elbow on the table,—the forefinger of his right hand on his lip—and continued in a meditative tone:

"Were I to meet this Jacopo—this Bernard—this Joseph Marie—this three fold traitor, on a dark night, I would be justified in putting him to death as I would a noxious reptile. But should I meet him in broad day—meet him in a quiet room, with the sunlight playing upon his coward face—Eh? What then?"

"I don't know—" and Jacopo turned his frightened face from side to side—"I can't tell. How should I? Never had the honor of bein' acquainted with this Jac—Jac-o-po—"

And those large eyes, shining in the pallid face of the unknown, made the poor wretch shiver with inexpressible terror.

"We will imagine a scene. I encounter him in a quiet room, on a calm sun-shiny day. I have a pistol; he has none. He is the enemy of the human race—a reptile when it is virtue to crush out of life. I am justified in killing him, not only by every law of justice, every instinct

of humanity, but in the name of Antonia, in the name of Marie, in the name of Guiellietta, and in the name of Madeline!"

"Do you think so? Indeed, it never struck me in that light," faltered Jacopo, completely frightened out of his wits.

"For every name a separate death, for every crime a stab, a pistol shot, and a Curse!" continued the unknown, centreing his gaze upon the face of the grovelling wretch. "What do you think of it, sir?"

The elderly gentleman arose and paced up and down the chamber, with his hands behind his back.

"He limps on one leg," muttered Jacopo, "and yet I can't see the cloven foot!"

He cringed nearer to the wall, for the unknown almost touched him as he passed along. Stealthily raising his eyes, Jacopo cast a hurried glance into that pale face, with its dazzling eyes, and bold broad forehead.

"I've seen it afore,—" he said, and wrung his hands—"I remember it by \* \* \*!"

Then, as if some memory had overwhelmed his soul—or that part of him which passed for a soul—with a new fear, he rested his hot forehead against the wall, and shook as with an ague chill.

"Rise!"—Jacopo heard the word, and started trembling to his feet.

The stranger confronted him. Confronted him with that form clad in black, with that massy forehead, and those eyes that seemed to turn into his soul. He was very near Jacopo—he could have touched him with his hand—but he shrunk away and cringed closer to the wall.

"What would you give to save your life?"

Hope dawned in Jacopo's diminutive eyeballs.

"Most anythin'" gasped the Philosopher—"Only don't you come any nearer. I'm a little nervous you know. Just rose out of a sick bed."

"What would you *do* to save your life?" asked the elderly gentleman, in a stern low voice.

"Anythin' you can mention," said the Philosopher, shaking from head to foot—"From burnin' a church to lamin' a cripple,—anythin'—anythin'—"

The unknown turned away, traversing the floor with a halting gait, while the Philosopher cringed closer to the wall.

It was a fearful moment for Jacopo.

"He's gettin' his pistols—no! It's a knife—ah! Unlucky conjunction of my planets—in a little while, say ten minutes or more, I'll be a carcass—stiff—with all sorts of gashes about me—"

"You heard of the village of Germantown?" said the stranger, as with his back turned toward Jacopo, he looked from the southern window.

"Germantown? What, that delightful Dutch paradise, where the children of two years weigh a hundred pounds, and old folks—especially old maids—*can't* die? The houses are built along one street, like a row

of buttons on a great coat, and every other house is haunted by a ghost, or a devil, or some such kind of thing. Did I ever hear of Germantown? My goodness! I was kicked there once—"

"You will go to Germantown. You will deliver these letters. And your life is spared."

The elderly gentleman turned toward Jacopo, holding some letters or papers in his extended hand.

"Obey my commands—deliver these letters—and your life is spared."—and he fixed his gaze upon the face of the Philosopher—"Do you consent?"

"Do I? Do I look as if I did n't?" whined Jacopo.

"Listen! You will hasten to Germantown, by a lane which skirts the forest not half a mile from where I stand—"

"Y-e-s Y-e-s!"

"You have heard of the 'township-line road'?"

Jacopo nodded as if he intended to shake his red nose from his face.

"You will deliver this letter at the corner of the lane and the 'township-line road.'—"

"There's no house there," interrupted Jacopo—"It's as wild as a basket of gray cats—"

"Near the forks of the road, stands a solitary cedar, and by this cedar a huge granite rock.—Are you listening.—"

Again Jacopo nodded—nodded with frightful intensity.

"In a crevice of this rock, which stands near the solitary cedar, you will place this letter. Mark it well, and note the superscription—'*To the King.*' Do you understand me?"

"All over," faltered Jacopo, with a convulsive grimace.

"After you have concealed this letter in the crevice, you will hurry on. Traversing the lane, you will emerge upon the solitary street of Germantown, opposite the lawn of Chew's House. You have seen this lawn?"

"It is separated from the road by a stone wall, nearly half a mile long"—suggested Jacopo.

"At the setting of the sun, a man dressed in a gray surtout, and mounted on a black horse, will await you near the southern end of this wall. He will rein his horse in the road, and turn his face to the west. You will give him this letter. You will remember the superscription—'*To the Duke?*' In the peril of your soul, do not confound these letters!"

"If I do, may I be——"

"Do not swear," said the elderly personage, with a smile quivering about his thin lips—"For an oath, with you, *Joseph Marie*, with you *Bernard*—do you comprehend—with you *Jacopo*,—is only a Herald sent before, to announce the coming of a—Lie. Do not swear."

"I wont swear. I'll be very particular on that point, I assure you."

"You will remember? The first letter to the crevice in the rock, the



second to the man who will wait for you, in front of Chew's lawn, and—the third—”

“The third?”

“After you have delivered the second letter, you will enter the Haunted House, and deliver this letter—it has no superscription—to the first person, whom you may chance to meet.”

“The Haunted House!” ejaculated our Philosopher, “How shall I know it? There's two or three dozen in Germantown.”

“Any of the villagers will tell you where it stands. Near the southern end of Chew's wall, —a substantial fabric of gray stone—two storied—with a cottage or cabin, on one side, and a garden surrounded by a high wall on the other. You cannot avoid it.”

“And I am to enter this House?” said Jacopo, with a shudder.

“Yes,—and mark you,—without being seen by any person. You must enter it in silence, in secrecy, and once within its walls, deliver this letter without superscription, as you see, to the first person whom you may encounter.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Jacopo. “Excuse me—only a sudden pain—but—but—if this blank should happen to be filled up with *his* name? *His*—you understand——”

He pointed downwards with the forefinger of his right hand

“What mean you!”

“The Dev-il!” faltered the Philosopher.

“Do you jest with me, sirrah?” said the unknown, as a cold smile played round his lips, while his eyes so strangely lustrous, flashed with anger. “Jest with your—Judge? You are courageous! A word from me, and you will become the Hangman's prey—a goodly acorn for the gallows's tree! Jest on—I will be pleased to hear you.”

“Mercy! Mercy!” screamed Jacopo,—“I will obey.”

“Spare your cries. I *can* trust you. For you know that I hold your life in my hands. Disobey me—fail in a single item of my commands—and you are dead, before the rising of another sun.”

The Haunted House!” murmured Jacopo—“Yes—I will obey—”

There was a wild light in the eyes of the unknown, a mocking smile about his lips, as he gazed upon the cringing Philosopher, and exclaimed—

“Yes, the Haunted House. The villagers avoid it—not a man in the place would enter it for his weight in gold. They say a curse broods over its walls—the curse of unnatural murder. It has been untenanted for many years; the garden is choked with weeds, and the grass grows about its threshold stone. Strange sounds are heard, echoing from its deserted chambers at dead of night,—and lights as strange, as spectral, flit from window to window, and shine dimly through the darkness—it is indeed an accursed place, this Haunted House.”

The cold moisture started in beads from Jacopo's brow. He gazed upon this singular personage, who stood motionless between his eyes and the window, he heard his calm, silvery voice, he felt the dazzling lustre of his full deep eyes, and a fear such as he had never experienced before—something more intense than physical cowardice—possessed his brain, and made his temples throb, while his heart grew cold—colder—almost lifeless.

"I will go," he faltered—"The first letter to the crevice in the rock; the second to the horseman in gray; the third to *the person* in the Haunted House. You see I remember—I will go—I will go—"

Grasping the letters, he retreated toward the door, his dilating eyes fixed upon the unknown.

"It is well," said the silvery voice, "and mark you—after the third letter is delivered return to the Wissahikon. I will need your *clerical* services, before the night is over. You will meet me—"

He drew near the trembling wretch and whispered a word in his ear.

"Yes—yes—I'll be there—I will," cried Jacopo—"Good afternoon, good afternoon—"

He disappeared through the doorway, but in an instant his face was seen again, and his shrill voice resounded through the room—

"Pardon me—" he cried, as his visage projected into the chamber, "But if it's not an impertinent question, how the devil did you get into this room?"

He did not pause for an answer for there was something in the eye of the stranger, that made his heart contract and dilate by turns. He turned wildly away.

Grasping the three letters with one hand, while the other crushed the three-cornered hat over his face, he hurried down the dark stairway, into the lower room, and, in an instant stood on the threshold stone, with the light of the summer sun upon his terror stricken face.

He did not pause for a moment, to glance toward the arbor, nor did he think of the white-haired old man, who but a little while ago, was menaced by the knife, in the hand of the frenzied negro.

But passing around the farm house, he crossed the barn yard, sprung over the fence, and with unsteady strides hurried through a cornfield toward a wood, which appeared at the distance of some two hundred yards. Once or twice he turned his affrighted face over his shoulder—cast a stealthy glance at the old fabric resting so calmly in the sun—and then urged onward with accelerated speed. It was not altogether a solemn thing, to see him plunging in amid the rows of corn, his dark skirts streaming behind him, while the shadow of his form was flung far over the field—like the grotesque profile of an immense spider.

He soon attained the wood, and with a bound plunged into its shadows. Through the thickly gathered brushwood, along the mossy spots of ver-

ture, now arrested by the branch of a tree, now stumbling over some gray old rock, Jacopo, otherwise known as the Philosopher, held on his way. Had you seen him, you would have sworn it was for a wager—this nightmare race—a match between his Legs and Time.

At last panting and blowing, his face covered with perspiration; his dark attire strewn with fragments of leaves and briars, he sank exhausted at the foot of a rock, and with a profound sigh, gave himself up to his Destiny.

"Let 'em take me," he said, between his gasps—"I'm ready. They can't do more than hang me. To think those legs should ever come to the gallows!"

From some obscure recess of his capacious pockets, he drew forth an immense handkerchief—silken in texture, and indigo in color—and polished his streaming visage until it shone again.

Possessed by some fatal idea, he evidently expected to be seized,—chained—and dragged away from this solitude by merciless hands.

"Ah! I know *his* face—have seen it afore. The devil himself is a fool to him—*HE* might set up school, and all the imps of darkness would take lessons in deviltry from *him*!"

Completely exhausted, with his back against the rock, and his limbs stretched out upon the sand, in the shape of the letter V—Jacopo the Philosopher became the victim of various terrors. His mouth, never too small, expanded in a chronic grimace; he polished his face with the indigo handkerchief; fanned his heated brow with the three-cornered hat.

"To go over a fellow's life in that style, and after one has reformed and turned from the error of his ways, to rub up old sins, and make one's tender conscience bleed in a dozen places! It was ungentlemanly—ah! Oh! How cursed hot it is!"

And while our Philosopher, agitated by the memory of these 'old sins,' and perchance by some indefinable idea of punishment, surrendered himself to the cheering influences of the indigo handkerchief—used as a towel—and the three-cornered hat—transformed into a fan—the letters which had been consigned to him, lay scattered upon the sward.

The sight of these letters, gleaming on the sand in a wandering ray, restored Jacopo to life and reason.

"I have a duty to perform. What human being has n't? If somebody chooses to turn me into a post office, it is my duty—posterity expects it—to see that I don't carry any thing that will do harm to even the humblest member of the great family of man."

And, Jacopo forgetting all his terrors, in the consciousness of duty raised the letters, and began to examine them with a searching glance.

'*To the King*'—only wafered. '*To the Duke*'—ditto. To—Blank—sealed, as I'm an honest man, and with a Coronet too, and the letters R. L. What the mischief does R. L. mean? Can't be *his* name?"



For a moment Jacopo cogitated profoundly with the tip of his finger applied to the tip of his nose.

"R. L. ! Reginald Lyndulfe !" he cried, "And in the name of the whole family of saints, what has *this person* to do with my young Lord of Lyndulfe ? Why the thing becomes mysterious !"

Satisfied that no time was to be lost, the Philosopher went to work in a calm, business-like manner. There was method in his virtuous curiosity. First he listened, turning his gaze from side to side. All was still—the foliage of that forest cover shut him out from the world. Next, moistening the wafers of the first and second letters, by applying them to his lips, he very adroitly slipped the long nail of his forefinger underneath each wafer, and ere a second had passed, his virtuous labor was rewarded by the sight of certain lines written in a firm, round hand.

This is the first letter—

*To the King—*

*At twelve to-night. The place—the Block House of the Wissahikon. You pursue this lane, cross the stream, and then turn to the right. It is but little more than half a mile from the place where you will find these words.*

This epistle without date or signature, filled Jacopo with indescribable wonderment.

"It appears to me," the thought crossed the mind of the Philosopher, "That those enigmatical words, constitute the dressing of some nice little Plot, which known to me, might be honestly turned into coin."

And, Jacopo sealed the letter again, and then with his nail removed the wafer of the second epistle.

*To the Duke—*

*The son of Gaspard Michael lives.*

Jacopo read, and his small eyes projected from their sockets.

"*Gaspard-Michael !*" he echoed, turning the letter in his fingers, as though he expected a nineteen-pounder to drop from its folds. "*To the Duke !*" Well, w-e-ll ! Why is it always my fate to be mixed up in the affairs of nations ? Unhappy Jacopo ! Sighing forever, for a nice little cot under a hill, with a quiet little wife, three or four children, and some pigs and chickens,—and always whirled away from this sweet image of domesticity, into the great Maelstrom of circumstance !"

With this profound reflection, Jacopo resealed the second letter, and turned his attention to the third.

"Sealed, and with coat of arms and cypher ! Shall I break the seal ? Miserable position for a conscientious man ! If I break the seal, I am

sure to be found out, and if I don't I shall remain ignorant of the contents of the letter."

The Philosopher was puzzled. Turning the epistle in various ways, he endeavored to obtain a glimpse of its contents, but in vain.

"Shall I break the seal?"

Before him rose the vision of that pale visage, lighted by the intensely brilliant eyes. Jacopo trembled, and the warm color vanished from his face.

Then he looked at the letter lovingly—with a sort of mingled desire and fear—like an epicure surveying a delicious morsel, which his physician tells him, it will be death to eat, or a vagrant cur observing a steak, which is suspended just one inch beyond his reach.

"I will break it!" said Jacopo, and—

He sprang to his feet with a yell. Cold, trembling, seized once more with abject fear, he grasped his hat and the letters, and, without looking once behind him darted madly through the bushes.

For even as the words, "I will break it!" rose to his lips, he felt a cold, hard hand laid upon his shoulder.

Afraid to look behind him, lest he might once more behold the pallid face and burning eyes, he shrunk away from that hand, and was gone into the thickest of the forest ere a second might be told.

He did not pause in his flight, until he stood at the forks of the road, where the 'township line' was crossed by the lane, leading from the Wis-sahikon to the village of Germantown.

It was a silent and desolate spot, centred in the midst of thickets backed by the forest.

The hot dust of the road was contrasted with the foliage of cedar and the pine, scattered on either side. Toward the west, the lane descending, a hill was lost in the mazes of the woods. But in the east it wound among cultivated fields, now skirting some wood-crowded hill, now lingering in the lap of some brook-watered valley, until it approached that line of gardens and orchards, amid whose verdure and blossoms appeared the dark gray tenements of Germantown.

Jacopo panting up the hill, beheld the cedar which stood alone at the forks of the road, while in the shadow of its branches appeared the massy granite rock.

"Dev'lish odd post office" he said, grinning through his terror, as he inserted the letter, in a crevice of this rock, and secured it by placing a small stone upon its superscription: "Should like to see the individual who is destined to pay the postage."

He started—the sound of horse's hoofs struck his ear.

"It was a hand—I'll swear it, a hand of iron," he cried as the memory of his last fright returned in full force, and without a moment's delay, he concealed himself from sight, under a clump of small cedars, near the roadside.

He could hear, although he could not see.

Protected from all observation, by the thickly grown bushes, he listened, while his heart mounted to his throat.

The echo of horse's hoofs grew more distinct, Jacopo crouching on hands and feet endeavored to catch a glimpse of the unknown rider, but in vain.

"He is coming near—nearer! From the direction of Germantown, too,—ha! Here he is, and I cannot see him. Hello! The horse stops—near the cedar—hark! The rider dismounts—O, for a glimpse, only a glimpse! As I'm a human being he's meddling with my post office—hey!"

It was true. The unknown horseman whom he could hear, although he could not see him, dismounted near the cedar tree, and for a moment a breathless silence ensued.

Jacopo moved; he was determined to obtain a glimpse of the stranger. "Who's there!" said a deep clear voice.

Jacopo was stone. Gathering himself in the smallest possible compass, he held his breath, and awaited the termination of this incident, in a spasm of mortal terror.

"There's a bullet through my ribs—I foresee it plainly," he thought, but dared not speak, as he crouched in the shadows.

"Who's there?"—again the voice was heard.

You may take my word for it, that our Philosopher did not reply.

Suddenly the tramp of horse's feet was heard again; Jacopo's heart bounded with joy. Those sounds grew faint and more distant; he dared to dash the branches aside, and steal a glimpse after the unknown.

Far down the lane, where it lay in full sunlight, just before it was lost among the woods toward the Wissahikin, Jacopo saw a grey horse, whose rider's tall form was wrapped in a long and drooping military cloak. That rider's face was turned away, and even as Jacopo gazed, from his retreat, the grey horse turning a point of the road, disappeared in the shadows of the forest.

"Rather warm for a military cloak, my respected friend," said the Philosopher, as he gathered up his spider-like limbs and crawled from his retreat. "Let me see whether the sanctity of our post office has been violated"

Looking stealthily over his shoulder,—listening for the faintest echo of a footstep—Jacopo drew near the rock, and crouching on hands and knees examined the crevice. The small stone which had secured the letter, lay on the sod; the crevice was empty, and of course the letter had disappeared.

Jacopo had been simply puzzled and frightened before this discovery; now he was utterly confounded.

He did not even utter an ejaculation. Seating himself by the wood-



side, with his three-cornered hat drawn over his eyes, he silently contemplated the mysterious events of the last hour.

"First, I find out, the guilt of the good old Peter of the white beard. Then the Devil appears to me, and converts me into a perepatelic post office. Urged by a simple impulse of duty, I am engaged in opening the Devil's correspondence, when a hand is laid on my shoulder. Last of all, a mysterious horseman, violates the sanctity of the rock, and steels the devil's letter."

These thoughts stirred the Philosopher's soul into speech :

"Such is the case. I will submit it to a committee of any three intelligent gentlemen, whether any thing like this, was ever heard of afore, or can be again, within the compass of three thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine solar years."

How far the Philosopher's reveries would have led him, had he been suffered to pursue the subject, we cannot tell. His meditations were suddenly brought to an end by a new object of arrangement.

A fragment of paper, looking for all the world, like a stray relic of some forgotten letter, appeared right before the eyes of Jacopo, nestling in the roadside dust. This you will say, was not very wonderful, but there was a name written upon the fragment, which at once held Jacopo—dumb and without motion—like the victim of a magician's spell.

The name was very simple—"George Washington."

"I have heard of it afore," said Jacopo, as a singular thought began to take shape in his active brain, "And now for Germantown."

Placing the fragment in a side pocket, and carefully grasping the remaining letters, he stood ready for his journey.

He brushed the dust and leaves from his attire, arranged his white cravat with an exactness truly ministerial, and then surveyed his shadow, as it lay upon the roadside dust, in all its native elegance.

"That graceful rotundity supported by those slender yet graceful columns, reminds one of the terrestrial Globe, resting upon the Pillars of Hercules. Quite a geographical figure, I vow!"

Turning toward the south-western wood, he remembered the *unknown hand*, with a shudder.

And yet at that moment, by the very rock, where the Philosopher had felt the hand, crouched the figure of a blind Negro, with a knife in his tremulous grasp.

"It am de berry debbil and no mistake," he soliloquized—"He pull my hand, jist as I was a-gwain to stick de ole boy. Den I run into de woods, and feel my way, and lay dis hand on de debbil's shoulder. Sorra mighty gosh! Dese tings make an ole black colo'd man afeard!"

Little did Jacobo imagine,—as he stood wondering and trembling at the forks of the road—that the unknown hand, laid upon his shoulder in the

woody covert, was nothing but the hand of his dark-skinned friend, familiarly called, *Black Sam*.

"Doubtless it was the Devil," said Jacopo, and turned his steps toward Germantown.

A pleasant walk it was, along the lane, which leading over hill and valley,—among fields and pastures, dotted with cattle, or set off by massy barns,—now down into this dell, where the brook was ever singing—now up this hill, whose top covered with chesnut, oak and maple, was living with the voices of the summer birds—made the heart dream of Eden, and the lip murmur "Paradise!"

Even Jacopo philosophically hardened into baseness, and rich only in memories of crime, was somewhat won by the summer loveliness of that sequestered lane.

"Fresher than Italy!" he cried, as surmounting a hill, he saw the long line of dark gray fabrics, peeping from a chaos of leaves and blossoms

Then down the hill, into a dell, the lane wandered with rustic walls of stone,—crowned with wild flowers—on either hand, and the breeze blowing freshly all the while, with its varied perfumes, stolen from the shrubs by the water-side. There was a bridge across the brook which murmured in the hollow of the dell; a bridge formed of a few rude planks, with wild grass growing in every crevice.

Jacopo lingered there for a single instant.

A green meadow, watered by the brook, and rising gently until it was lost in an apple orchard. Sunlight, very rich and hazy, upon the heights, and in the valley, shadows deep and solemn. The air full of bees, humming their kimmer song, and the great sky, arching far above without a cloud.

Something there was in this scene, that stole imperceptibly into Jacopo's heart, as resting his arms upon the rude rail of the bridge, he drew in the fragrance and music of the place, as you would drink a cup of rich old wine. May be in that moment, some ember of a better nature, flamed up within his heart, and by the sudden light he read, how base and cowardly had been his life; how lost and sunken, from every manly purpose, his prostituted soul. May be? Yes, it was even so. For although no tear shone on his cheek, nor although no tremor of the lip altered a single throb of sincere feeling, yet for an instant, the heart of the degraded Man, went back to some dear nook of Childhood, and over the dreary wastes of memory, he caught one golden gleam from other Days.

How shall we account for this gleam of purer feeling? Was it but a ray from the ashes of his own soul, or was it, a wandering beam, from the other World? Perchance, even in that moment, some pure Spirit—invisible to the gross eyes of sense—came with sudden steps to his side, and spoke to his sealed ear, a Word from God.

In saying that this Man felt purer, better, for a single moment, as the

religion of that silent dell melted into his soul, we profoundly beg the pardon of those learned and pious people, who maintain, that Human Nature is all Corrupt; born to be wicked; and destined to grow fat on sin. Your forgiveness gentle folks. Total Depravity is a comfortable dogma, and we would not for a moment rob you of the holy consolation which flows from the belief, that the Human Heart—even the heart of the Babe, resting so smilingly upon its Mother's heart—is nothing but a Laboratory of Crimes.

Forgive us, if we believe somewhat differently.

Even this wretch, who leaning upon the rail of the rustic bridge, surveys the silent dell,—this wretch who embodies in his own person, all the craft and cunning, the menial vice and livened baseness which forms the very Religion of modern Civilization—appears to us, not altogether lost and wicked; not altogether corrupt and depraved.

Search his heart, horrified as it is by the disease of selfishness, and you will find a throb of purer feeling, beating even there,—even there, you will discover the pulse of a holier,—yes—a God-like nature.

If there exists such a thing as Total Depravity on the face of the earth, you will find it in the heart of the man, who has so brutalized his nature, as to be able to believe the Dogma.

For while the Great Father of Us All, hold the stars in the hollow of his hand, no man can assert, that He has created one being, totally depraved,—only one—without having the Lie which he utters, flung back into his face by every star that shines in the midnight sky, by every blossom that floats in the summer air,—by the angel-eyes of childhood smiling some glimpses of Heaven, even into the soul of Jesus.

Jacopo lingered there until the shadows began to grow longer, under the orchard trees, and at last with something like a sigh went in silence up the hill. The hill-top gained, the free sun and air upon his face once more, the town in sight, its roofs framed in foliage, —he was himself again, and all traces of better feeling, had passed away with the silence and shadow of the grassy dell.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

## ADVENTURES OF JACOPO.

"GERMANTOWN!" soliloquized Jacopo, advancing with a most portentous stride—"Where witches are plenty as cabbages, and ghosts come thick as onions. I must break upon the vision of the unsophisticated villagers, gently, very gent-l-y, and yet imposing as a full moon seen through a fog."

And he passed rapidly along the lane.

There came green fields, full of the music of bees and the fragrance of new mown hay. There came gardens too, bordered with fruit trees,—the cherry, the peach, the apple and the pear,—and with little children and brown-cheeked peasant girls, singing and laughing among the vine-covered arbors. There came an old cottage, with the roof bent down by the gnarled limb of a great oak tree, and its solitary window, adorned with a single flower, set in a broken pitcher. And on the stone before the low doorway, underneath the music of the rustling leaves, was a gaunt old man, with a face as brown as a russet apple, hair white as snow, and garb as poor as very Poverty. And as he turned his face,—for he was startled by the sound of the coming footstep—the sun shone upon it, and gave a golden glow to his cold, dead eyeballs.

He was blind, and poor and old, and yet before his cabin door, he sat, pressing his hands together, and turning his sightless eyes to the sun, as if tho' he was glad that he was alone, and singing all the while in a cracked voice, some words of a rude German Song.

Jacopo glanced upon him with grimace,—wondered "*what the deuce he was singing about*"—and without a word, passed on his way.

Soon he came to the end of the lane, and stood in the solitary street of Germantown.

Jacopo sank on a bench, by the roadside, and for some moments contemplated the novelty and freshness of the scene in silence, and yet with frequent ejaculations of delight.

He gazed to the south. The dusty road, in some places shadowed by rows of trees, in others reddened by gleams of sunlight, descended the slope of a long hill, and far to the south, was lost to view under an arch of foliage. There were tenements of wood and stone on either hand; here a cottage, with its gable-end toward the street, and a rustic porch before the door; there a two-storied edifice with steep roof and narrow windows, and a cool, quiet garden, sheltered from the roadside dust by trees. Altogether, that road stretching to the south, presented an impressive perspective of cottages, gardens and trees, reposing half in shadow, half in sunlight, with a clear blue sky above.

Jacopo turned his eye to the north. A wide and grassy lawn, separated from the road by a stone wall, and dotted with elms and oaks, with a gray old mansion in the background, slept in the beams of the afternoon sun.

That lawn, reposing so quietly in the sunlight, was soon destined to become holy ground—drenched by the blood of martyrs, its grass and flowers—its dark gray mansion rent by cannon shot, and crowded with dead—it was soon to be known in history as the Battle-Field of German-town.

Opposite the bench on which our Philosopher rested, appeared a two-storied mansion, which seemed invested with a peculiar atmosphere of silence and isolation. Among the homes of that quiet hamlet, it looked sad and deserted. The shutters were fast closed; there was grass in the nooks of the high stone steps before the dusky hall door; the steep roof was covered with green moss and withered leaves. It looked as though no foot had passed its threshold for many years.

On the northern side, the foliage of its neglected garden overhung a high wall, whose gray stones were half-concealed by a wild and luxuriant vine. And on the south, built half way up the gloomy gable of the mansion, a one-storied cabin was seen, with a little garden plot between it and the road, and the wide-spreading branches of a solitary oak stretching above its roof.

Through the leaves of the oak, the smoke of the cabin chimney wound into the sky, shining and glowing against the blue heavens as it caught the radiance of the sun.

"Well!" cried Jacopo, "That cabin under the big tree, looks like a solitary chicken under the wing of a fat hen, while this gloomy mansion—ugh! looks like a frozen night-mare."

Arising from the bench he crossed the road,—surveyed the silent mansion with a careful scrutiny—and then passed on, until he reached the neatly white-washed pale fence, in front of the cabin.

"Ho! Ho! A table under the oak—bottles and mugs, and two or three buglers taking the world easy! I hope I'm not intruding upon a family party—"

With his hand upon the latch of the gate, he hesitated for a moment, uncertain whether to enter or pass on, when his eye was arrested by a board nailed upon the bark of the tree, and bearing in remarkable characters a most mysterious inscription.

### *Bier & SiDeR.*

These enigmatical characters seemed intended to convey the idea that Beer and Cider were to be obtained for coin, somewhere in the vicinity

of the oak. Encouraged by this view of the case, Jacop lifted the latch and entered.

The three villagers seated around the table, with pewter mugs in their hands, did not hear his approach. Bending over the table, their heads laid together; they maintained a low-toned and earnest conversation.

Our Philosopher paused and listened:

"Chon you may dependt it's a fact," said one of the three, who appeared in shirt sleeves and red waistcoat—"Dis house has bin shut up dese twenty or dirty years. Dey do say, de man as owned it, soldt himself to de devil.—"

Jacopo started, and drew a step nearer.

"Now Jake, you haint got the rights of the story," responded "Chon" or John, whose sharp features were half-hidden by an extensive wool-hat.—"The house is owned by somebody away there in the old country, and there's a lawsuit about it afore somebody they call Chancery, or some sich name, and of course it's shet up until the case is decided. What do you say, Pete?"

"Pete" was a solemn little man, with an apron on his chest, and some three or four days beard on his face.—We may here remark, that in our researches into the Ancient Records, we have never been able to ascertain the full names of those three respectable individuals; they are simply called Chon, and Jake, and Peter. It appears however, that "Jake" was a man of substance, well-to-do in the worldly sense; Pete a shoemaker, and Chon a man-of-all-work about somebody's farm.

As Pete replied, our friend Jacopo still unobserved, drew a step nearer:

"There's been lights seen in that house. Queer noises heer'd. Rattlin' of a chain. Say somebody was murdered. Thirty years ago, come next Christmas. It's *his* ghost. The man that was murdered. They say so."

Lest the remarks of Peter should appear broken or abrupt, it may as well be stated, that he punctuated with his pewter mug, applying it to his lips wherever we have placed a full stop.

"Ish it possible!" ejaculated Jake, with eyes like saucers.

"*They* say so," whispered Pete, again punctuating with his mug.

It taint,—I tell you, it taint," remarked Chon, fanning himself with his wool hat, "As to its bein' ha'nted, I'm not the man to deny that, for we all know that ghosts in some houses are thick as hops, but as to it's bein' owned by a man that sold hisself to the Devil, I don't believe it."

"Rash man!" said a shrill, screeching voice.

With one bound the three started to their feet, and beheld Jacopo attired in solemn black, with his hands extended in the air, and his mouth composed in an expression of remarkable severity.

"Rash man!" he continued, while the three stricken into statues, listened with vacant amazement—"As an humble clergyman, I feel bound



to protest against your unbelief. You doubt that a man can sell himself to the devil? My young friend, I pity you! Why in the course of my journeying around this scene of terrestrial vanity, I have met with no less than six hundred persons, who acknowledged with tears, that they had sold themselves to the devil.—*They had married old maids,*” he said in an under tone.

“It’s a Dominie!” cried Jake.

“I don’t deny it,” said Chon, awed and abashed by the reproof of the reverend man, “But as to this house bein’ owned by sich a person—”

“Shet up Chon. Don’t you see the Minister’s agin you. Take a seat, sir,—travelled far to day?”

Pete brushed a chair with his apron, and placed it before Jacopo.

That reverend personage was now in his glory. Calmly surveying the three, he begged them in a pleasant voice to be seated once more, adding with a sweet smile that he was not at all angry, but felt rather charitable than otherwise.

“I am on my way to my little flock,” he continued, as he took a seat at the table—“I have a parish in the back settlements among the Injin’s beyond Carlisle. You never heard of Hog’s Run, did you?”

They had never heard of this classic locality; and Jacopo leaning back in his chair and resting his hands upon his paunch, concluded his remarks by asking for a little cider.

“Betsy!” exclaimed Jake, “Dis way, dis w-a-y! Dere’s a gentleman here as wants a glass of siter.”

And in a moment “Betsy,” the proprietor of the roadside cottage, appeared in the doorway, holding a bowl of fragrant October in her hand.

Betsy was by no means old or thin, or ugly. A bouncing dame of some thirty-five years, with very small bright eyes shining in a face round as the full moon, and blooming as a garden of roses. Her capacious bust was enveloped in a snow-white handkerchief, and her dark linsey skirt descending but half way below the knee, left exposed to view a pair of ankles, which encased in home-spun stockings, seemed altogether too slender for her luxuriant form. Her feet, too, enveloped in course leather shoes, did not seem at all adapted to bear the weight of so much substantial womanhood, and as for her hands, small and white and fat, with dimples sprinkled all over the joints, they were altogether too diminutive in comparison with her arms, which bared from the shoulder, showed their clear skin and full round outline freely to the sunlight.

On Betsy’s chesnut-brown hair, parted neatly over her full moon face a small muslin cap nestled like a bird in its nest; her cheeks, her chin,—her neck—whiter even than the snowy handkerchief which bound her bust—were scattered with dimples, every one of which laughed like a sunbeam.

Betsy was a widow; she sheltered her sorrows in the cottage by the

roadside ; in the winter she knitted and spun, and helped the neighbors on festival occasions ; in the summer she bloomed and flourished like the bee in its hive, or the seed in an apple, selling 'Bier & Sider' to thirsty villagers, or dusty travellers.—So runs the quaint portraiture of the Ancient Records.—

Jacopo opened his eyes ; he was astounded by the display of so many charms—charms at once compact and luxuriant.

Springing from his seat he darted toward the door, and took the bowl from her hand.

"And this is Betsy !" he said, meditatively shutting one eye, as he suffered his fingers to linger upon the hand which held the cup. "My name is James, Betsy, the Reverend Jacob James. A friend of mine, who passed this way last year, spoke of you, and of your—cider. You have been well, Betsy?"

Betsy laughed. Oh, the Poverty of language ! Had you seen her white teeth gleam out from her red lips, while her eyes danced, and the dimples on her cheeks and chin and throat laughed in chorus ! In fact, she laughed *all over*. Then, when she spoke, every word touched with a scarcely perceptible German accent, how the white of her teeth and the red of her lips seemed to play bo-peep with each other !

"Ha, ha ! Excuse me—you must n't think anythin' of me laughin', but—but—"

And away she went again. We cannot aver that Jacopo's somewhat singular figure excited her merriment, for a black coat and white cravat, will turn the eye away at any time from physical or moral deformity. Jacopo as Jacopo might have been simply ridiculous ; but, Jacopo as a Reverend was decidedly respectable.

Betsy laughed for the same reason that the ripe peach looks beautiful in the sun,—or the bird sings, when perched on the topmost bough—she laughed because she was *full of life*.

Betsy was a widow ; Betsy had no care ; Betsy had teeth like pearls ; therefore Betsy laughed.

"Don't mindt te gal, Dominie," exclaimed Jake, "It's her way. Always grinnin' like a chessy-cat."

"Mind her ? Bless my soul, I love to see young persons enjoy themselves. Laugh, my child, laugh. It expands the muscles, throws out the chest, and clears the cobwebs out of the brain. Laugh, my child, laugh !"

And the venerable Jacopo, in a fit of paternal feeling, laid his hand upon the round arm of the Widow Betsy.

"'Young persons,' ha, ha, ha ! Gott bless us ! Ha ! Ha ! I'm an oldt woman—ha ! ha !"

And as if to prove it, she folded her white arms over her capacious bust, while the dimples went rioting her cheeks, and the ring of her laugh pealed on the air, mellow and musical, as the note of a bird.

"Twenty-one," said Jacopo, "Twenty-one. Not a year older. Quite a child—a little girl, in fact."

And the good man patted her playfully on the downy cheek.

"Tont!" said the widow with a simper and a blush, that would have done honor to a lady of fashion—"Be gwit tat!"

Jacopo warmed into a playful humor—Reverend men will be playful sometimes—attempted to seize her hand. You should have seen Betsy as she stood in the cabin door, laughing all over, as a stray sunbeam fell on her dimples, and danced about her throat, where it began to widen into the expansive bust!

"Mindt yer own pizness!" she said, with an air of offended dignity some what modified by her dimpled visage.

Encouraged by the good humor of the buxom dame, Jacopo grew familiar—nay, paternal, is the word. He took her hand, he rolled it gently within his own, as a child plays with a piece of stolen dough; his small eyes begin to sparkle in his comely visage.

"You must be careful of your health, my dear,"—her voice sinking into a persuasive whisper—"Avoid the night air. Eschew wet feet. Your health is delicate—your form fragile—the slightest puff of air might blow you into a gallopin' consumption. Ah, me! What a tender flower!"

Jacopo cast his eyes to heaven, and fashioned his mouth into a grimace of frightful solemnity.

"Delicate? Me!" cried Betsy—"O Lordt!" and then in the serene amplitude of her charms, she laughed and shook, shook and laughed again, until she looked like an immense flower, blossoming in the frame of that cabin door, with its leaves tost to and fro, by a sudden blast.

And all the while, the sunbeam went dancing over her face. now tinting her warm lip, now lingering about her white round throat, now nestling in a dimple of her joyous cheek.

"By the bye my dear child," continued Jacopo still kneading the plump hand of the good Betsy: "They say that it is *haunted*."

"It?" and Betsy's eyes expanded while something like a cloud came over her laughing face.

"The house next door. The old house. Owned by a gentleman who sold himself to the devil. Tenanted by *spooks*—eh, Betsy?"

Just as you have seen a sheet of clear and spotless letter paper, suddenly made hideous by a blot from an upturned ink bottle, so the face of Betsy, round and joyous, grew black with a cloud of indignation.

"Spooks?" she cried—and her voice grew shrill—"Who says it? You, Jake? Or, Chon? Or, was it you, Pete?"

The three dropped their mugs, and started backward with one impulse. Not a word was said. Betsy stood in the doorway clenching her small hand, while her face flashed, and her eyes shone with anger. Jacopo with



his mouth agape and his eyes expanding in a ludicrous stare, looked as though he had suddenly stepped upon a rattle-snake.

"Who says so?" continued the indignant dame—"A pack of idle, goot-for-nothing vagapones to go apout tellin' lies apout a decent oldt house! Aint ye ashamed o'yerselfs? Nefer show yer ugly mugs inside of my toors agin. Ha'nted in-t-e-e-d!"

Betsy paused for breath, and shook her clenched hand in the faces of the affrighted villagers, who looked into each others faces, and kept stealthily retreating toward the gate.

"But Betsy, dey do say, dat te tefil—" begun Jake.

"Betsy *spooks* has been seen thar'" cried Chon.

"An' noises heer'd—dev'lish noises—" suggested Pete.

Betsy seized her broom. The affair grew solemn.

The broom, that peculiar weapon of all lonely and afflicted women, from the trembling virgin who grasps it to immolate a spider to the injured wife who rears it to admonish a drunken husband—the Broom! It was the sight of this formidable missile that made the pot-companions tremble. Their retreat became a route. With one brilliant attack, Betsy worried them over the grass plot and charged them through the gate.

"Now ye *ornery fystes* ever say tat house is hanted agin if ye dare!"

They went their ways, Jake cursing, Pete blowing and Chon endangering his blood vessels by a smothered fit of laughter.

"Te *ornery fystes*!" panted Betsy as she flung the broom away, and sank exhausted into a chair, beside the wondering Jacopo.

"Ornery fystes!" This phrase looks mysterious. The first word is a modification of "Ordinary" and is much used in the Land of Penn, to express the last extreme of worthlessness. A spavined horse; a Bank Director 'found out' in his little speculations; a lady of fashion, whose husband and lover come to fisty-cuffs, about her damaged reputation; a lawyer who pockets fees from both sides, and drives a smart trade between the Thief and the Bailiff; a sheriff elected to office by a certain party and sharing all the plunder with the hungry ones of the opposite party—these all, in Pennsylvania language are "ORNERY."

As to the cabalistic word, "*Fyste*" we know not whether it is German, Greek or Indian. Possibly it is Choctaw. It was once much in vogue in the German districts of Pennsylvania. It is said to have been applied in the first place, to those benevolent pilgrims, who journeying from the land of Plymouth Rock, enlightened the benighted Germans by a severe course of wooden nutmegs, horn flints and patent medicines.

"Tat Yankee *fyste*!" was the exclamation of a Berks County farmer who had been persuaded to purchase a Patent-Right of an Improved Wheel-barrow which was to go of itself; by *gravitation* as the Yankee candidly observed.

But those days are passed. New England from the fountain of her

overflowing benevolence, no longer sends to ignorant Pennsylvania, her former goodly offering of Pedlars and Horse-Jockies. She sends us Preachers, Editors and Lawyers. They do not peddle—not they! Nor jockey? No, Sir! Why our souls could not be saved, nor our minds enlightened, nor the course of Justice go forward, were it not for these Missionaries, sent to our benighted clime, by Old New England. In fact, every path that leads to eminence or pennies, is macadamized by flints from Plymouth Rock. They preach our sermons, they do our law, they publish our papers, they write our histories. Pennsylvania could not get on without them. And once a year they get together in some cozy hotel—as many of them as Society can spare—and amid a wilderness of chowder and punkin-pie, they drench themselves with Cider from Jersey and Blarney from Plymouth Rock. Persons there are, who pretend that New England keeps her Religion, her Intellect, her Liberality at Home, and only sends abroad her Fanaticism, her Stupidity and Meanness. These persons grossly err; we all know that Pennsylvania like a worn out clock would stop forever, were she not wound up by a key, fashioned from the iron bolt of that New England gibbet on which they hung Quakers in good old times. Was it not a Boston Historian who told us, the other day, that William Penn was only great, because he came of true blue Yankee stock; a kind of Quaker mastodeon from the fossil region of Plymouth Rock?

The word "*Fyste!*" was once applied to the Pedlar and Jockey; now—

In this modern day, the word has undergone strange modifications. It has become a word of honor. It is no longer applied to the cheat, the blackguard and the vagabond. It is now used to designate the learned Judge who preaches Temperance from the Bench and sells licenses at the Back-Door. Or, the honorable Sheriff who distributes "Tracts" before he is elected, and after his election pounces upon the possessions of the unfortunate debtor, feeding and gorging himself, even to the last shred, until you are reminded of a buzzard perched upon its festering prey. Or, the Politician who hungry for office, and sworn to have it at all hazards, prepares himself for his grave duties by a series of arduous exercises, such as Obscenity from the stump, Libel in the newspaper and Perjury everywhere.

These gentlemen are all known as "*Fystes*;" some of them, truth to tell, well deserve the full force of the vernacular,—"*Ornery Fystes*."

"My dear child," whined Jacopo, as the dame sat panting and blowing in the chair, whose capacious arms might scarce contain her bulky loveliness—"Be calm!"

He handed her a mug of cider, and fanned her heated visage with his three-cornered hat.

"Be calm!" echoed the panting dame—"It's very easy to talk! But to

sit still and hear sich nonsense, apout a ha'nted house, spooks, the tefil and all tat!"

"Then the house is *not* haunted," suggested Jacopo very mildly.

"Good Lordt! N-o-o!" and the Widow burst into a laugh.

"No spooks there? Eh?"

"Spooks? Not even the spook of a cat,"—Betsy laughed until she shook again.

"Then tell me, my child, why it is shut up so closely, like a grave vault, or a bottle of old wine, with its red cork covered with cobwebs?"

The Reverend man, in the warm impulse of paternal feeling, seized her hand, and looked quite tenderly into her eyes.

"Because te folks who owns it is away in Englandt or Chiney," replied Betsy, with sudden gravity—"Do you think tat I'd live next toor to a ha'nted house? I vos brought up respectable, I vos. And I've lived respectable tis eighteen year, since I lost my huspand, poor Adam, Gott bless him. A purty shtory inteed! Tat in my oldt tays I should live next toor to a house wit spooks and tevils in it!"

"It is ridiculous, Betsy, nay it is infamous!" cried Jacopo, with becoming gravity. "For one I don't believe it. Get me a pipe, my dear."

Betsy rose in order to comply with this request, when a harsh deep voice broke suddenly upon the evening stillness.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

### "THE VAGABOND."

"AND so they say the old house is haunted—do they?"

Betsy uttered a scream and Jacopo bounded from his chair.

The speaker stood very near them—within arm's length indeed—he had passed through the gate unperceived, and now pausing under the branches of the oak, rested his hands upon his staff, and gazed into their wondering faces, while the sunlight tinted his grey hairs.

He was an old man, very tall and robust, with sunburnt features and long hair and beard—both as white as the driven snow. He stood resting his hands upon a knotted staff, while the sunlight revealed his gaunt form, enveloped in miserable attire. In fact, he was arrayed in rags. The garment that clothed his chest, and gathered to his waist by a leathern girdle, descended to his knees, might have once been blue or black or



brown, but now its texture and color were lost in a multitude of patches. His shoes, rent and torn, were bound to his feet by an intricate lacing of rags and cords; his tattered buckskin leggings, clothing limbs by no means deficient in muscle, were also fastened by strips of twine and leather.

And thus, staff in hand, the gaunt old man, clad in rags that a beggar might have been ashamed to wear, stood between the gazers and the light of the western sky, his silvery hair reddened at the edges by the rays of the declining sun.

His sunburnt face and piercing eyes, shadowed by an old felt hat, and framed in that mass of snowy beard and hair, were animated by something like a smile, as he surveyed the wondering pair. Here Jacopo, with his mouth agape, his small eyes expanding in his blooming face; there the buxom widow, her round arms crossed over her luxurious bust, while her mouth assuming the shape of the letter O! displayed her pearly teeth in even rows.

"A very pleasant day, my friends," said the old man, his harsh deep voice tempered to a mild and pleasant tone, while he slowly lifted the hat from his white hairs—"And so they say—" his voice was harsh and deep again—"that the old house is haunted—do they?"

"Vonders vere he comes from," murmured Betsy.

"Looks like a Ragged Rainbow," soliloquized Jacopo.

"You do not answer me," continued the old man, with a smile that showed that despite his years, his teeth were firm and white—"Am I an unwelcome guest?"

"Vots yer name?"—Betsy assumed a position of great dignity, while Jacopo slunk quietly behind her capacious shoulders—"Never seed you in tese parts pefore?"

"Pay-As-I-Go," responded the old man, and at the word, from some obscure nook of his rags, he drew forth a crown of shining silver. "That's my name. And now I'll take some bread and cheese, or a bit of cold chicken and a mug of cider, with a pipe of tobacco. Stir yourself, my good woman."—

Betsy was puzzled. Shading her eyes with her hand, she gazed anxiously into the old man's visage, while the face of Jacopo was seen peering over her white shoulder. Something there was in the manner and appearance of the stranger that impressed the good dame with a sensation of wonder mingled with fear.

"His peard is so white and yit his voice is so shtrong! His dress so raggedt, and yit he handles money like a Lordt! Kin he want to steal—or murder?"

These thoughts passed rapidly through Betsy's mind, while Jacopo, pressing his lips against her smooth shoulder—unconsciously you may be sure—whispered softly in her ear—

"Speak to him kind, Betsy. He may be an angel in disguise."

Betsy had heard of angels in a state of Paradisical nudity; she had seen in her old Dutch Bible various pictures of corpulent angels, but the idea of a Ragged Angel was too much for her gravity.

She laughed until the air rung again. But her merriment as suddenly died away. The old man grew red in the face, he gasped for breath, and sank helplessly in a chair, his mouth wide open and his eyes closed, as if in a deathly swoon.

To seize a mug of cider, to moisten his lips and face with the fragrant October, to chafe his hands with her soft palms, and slap him violently on the back as you would slap a choking infant; all this was the work of a moment.

Betsy was in her true element. Hovering round the insensible old man, she looked like one of those substantial Angels, pictured in the Dutch Bible aforesaid, while Jacopo, stirred into activity by her example, and fanning the stranger with his coat-tails, brought to mind, a Dutch Satan making mischief near a Dutch Eve.

"Lordt if he should die on my place, we'd have the Coroner sittin' on him—Git som water—dash it in his face—shake him, shake him—"

The old man moved, at first very gently and then in the agonies of a spasm. He clutched his staff and brandished it wildly to and fro, while Betsy tried very hard to hold him in the chair. The staff came in contact with Jacopo's shoulder; as a matter of course Jacopo plunged rather suddenly to the ground. When he raised himself again, and rubbed his eyes, he saw a sight which made him doubt his eyes.

The luxuriant form of Betsy rested on the old man's knee; the old man's arm was about her neck; the old man's white beard against her smooth cheek—nay the old man—in his spasm—was kissing her violently, —kissing her warm lips, her cheeks, her chin—kissing every dimple in her joyous face. And in his spasm, he pressed her round neck in his fingers, and gathered her massive loveliness, very closely to his breast.

"Let me go! Be guit! 'Te tefil!" screamed Betsy, completely bewildered by this spasmodic attack—"You old fyste—you—"

The old man stopped her mouth with a kiss, and Betsy with one desperate bound escaped from his arms, and stood panting and glowing, her kerchief disarranged and her brown hair floating loosely about her blushing face.

Jacopo could not believe his eyes!

The old man, recovered from his swoon, sate calmly in his chair, resting his hands upon his staff, while his aged face, turned from side to side—from Betsy who blushed and panted here, to Jacopo, who squat upon the ground, rubbed his eyes without ceasing—with an expression of vague bewilderment.

"Excuse me, my good friends;" he muttered wildly—"Where am I?"

he continued like a man awaking from some troubled dream—"O, I remember! One of my spasms."

He passed his hand over his aged face,—very slowly and with a thoughtful motion—like a man who endeavors to recall his wandering memory.

"Spasms!" ejaculated Jacopo rubbing his bruises.

"Spasms!" echoed Betsy, bursting with indignation, as she arranged her hair and smoothed her kerchief.

"Spasms, my children," said the aged man, "Been subject to 'em since I was a boy." It was beautiful to a painter's eye, to see that figure of venerable old age, enthroned in the arm chair, under the oaken tree, with Jacopo prostrate at its feet, and Betsy hovering near.

"Get me something to eat, my good girl, or the spasm will come on again," said the ragged venerable, while a curious light shone in his eyes.

Betsy turned away, enraged and murmuring, her great bust heaving like an immense billow, as she entered the cabin door, while Jacopo rising from the ground with a careful motion, seated himself as far from the stranger as possible, observing him at the same time, as you would eye a suspicious beast.

"Devil take his spasms," he muttered rubbing his wounds.

Betsy returned, glorious in her full-blown beauty, but formidable with festival array; a jug of cider, a platter of cold ham, a loaf of home-made bread and a pipe of fragrant tobacco.

"There," she said emphatically, "Andt no more of yer *spasms*."

The old man coolly wheeled his chair, and set about his work. It was by no means eating; it was actual work, that he displayed before the eyes of the good Widow. With one impetuous movement he assaulted the ham, carried the home-made bread by storm, and brought the cider to close quarters. In silence, as though conscious of having a certain amount of labor before him, and a fixed time for its accomplishment, the good old man pursued his task. Jacopo sat aloof, his round visage rendered melancholy by a vacant stare; the widow sank into a seat, her voluptuous mouth once more assuming an alphabetical shape, and writing a sort of dumb O! upon her blooming face.

"I thought I had an appetite," murmured the Philosopher. "I say, my good friend, did you ever in the course of your travels happen to be shipwrecked,—and if so—did you ever happen to eat anybody,—for instance, a fat man, or a healthy child, or even a hearty little nigger?"

To this polite inquiry the old man did not respond, until he had carried by storm, the last bit of ham, and the last crust of home-made bread.

"I feel my spasm, comin' on again," he said—his eyes twinkling—his staff once more in his right hand.

Jacopo moved his chair; the widow seized her broom.



"I sometimes gits tem tings meself, and when I toes, I breaks people's heads mit tis broom."

"And that it was, that drove your poor Adam to see, some sixteen years or so ago," said the old man, lighting his pipe, at the tinder box, which stood on the table.

Reddening and panting the good dame started to her feet, satisfied that the stranger was in fact, none other than the———.

"My husband!"

"Your husband (puff.) Poor Adam! (puff) He used te weep at the memory of that broom. 'Caleb,' says he to me one day, as we sat on ship board together, if you should ever chance to get to Germantown, seek out my wife, and tell her that the old broom was the cause of my broken heart. (puff) Poor Adam!"

The widow was dumb; the ends of her fingers trembled with a sort of feline motion.

"What would you say if Adam was to come back?" continued the aged man, "Come back, sometime within a month"—he paused and puffed—"within a week—" pause and puff again—"within a day—an hour—(pause and puff) within a minute!"

"My Gott!" gasped the widow, sinking back into a chair, "but *you* aint *him*?"

The old man leaned his head upon his hand, thus shading his face from the light, while the Widow bending forward in her chair, awaited his answer in an agony of suspense.

"This reminds me of Homer," muttered Jacopo, "a Ragged Ulysses and a Dutch Penelope."

"Has'nt she a dog to know him, and then die? Even a cat would do."

"No, Betsy; I am not *him*," said "Pay-As-I-Go" to give the stranger his own name, "Let me cut a long story short. Scarcely a year ago, Adam died in my arms, somewhere in the West Indies. Yellow fever, you understand? He told me to give you, this—"

He flung a small package, wrapped in brown paper and tied with twine, into the widow's lap. The twine broke and the brown paper parted; sixteen bright pieces of gold, started from the aperture, and glistened vividly before the eyes of the thunder-stricken woman.

"Only dead a year!" she gasped, "Why ten if I'd married Chon Butz a year an' two months ago, tey would have put me in jail for—for—"

"Mahogany," suggested Jacopo

"For mahogany," continued the widow, using this new synonym for bigamy without a thought, that it was in the least degree incorrect—"Only a year! Poor Adam!"

She applied her apron to her eyes, and the bright pieces clinked upon the ground.

The old man did not permit her much leisure for the indulgence of her

grief, for while the tears streamed over the blooming cheeks, he seized his staff, and rose from his chair.

"I have another commission to fulfil in these parts," he said "Betsy do you know anything about an old couple, who used to live in a cottage, somewhere about the graveyard? Morton, I think they were called,—or what was their name?"

There was a slight tremor in the old man's voice; his eyes, bright at all times shone with unusual light.

"Morgan," said Betsy looking at him from the corners of his eyes, "Very old folks they vos—"

"Was?" echoed the old man with a start.

"Been deadt a year," continued Betsy—"Never was very well, since their son, went away some two years ago. Old Abel and Hannah sickened and diedt within two days of each other."

The old man was observed to tremble, and grasp his staff, while his features were violently agitated.

"Dead!" he muttered, "What did you say was the name of their son?"

"Gilbert Morgan," said Betsy, "But tell me more of Adam—"

"Dead!" again repeated the old man, "And I had a message from their son. Tell me,—did they want for bread? Were their last days wretched with poverty—with hunger and cold? Speak, Betsy, for—for—you see poor Gilbert told me to see them,—to give them gold—and beg their blessing on his guilty soul. Speak, I say! Did the old folks die the miserable death of poverty and age?"

"I was with 'em mesself," said Betsy, between her sobs, "'Tey wanted for nothing while I was tere, andt I saw 'em laidt in te grave; but, Gilbert, what ever became of him?"

"God bless you for that," the voice of the old man was tremulous but earnest as he dashed a tear from his eye—"You were near them in their dying hour. God bless you! As for Gilbert, what kind of character did he bear in these parts? A wild fellow,—drunken,—eh?"

"Many a time have I seen him stand where you stand, when he was quite a poy. A goot poy, too, but—Gilbert went away suddenly about two years ago—next christmas will be three years—andt—there was a young girl foundt murteredt back on the Wissahikon—Madeline Dorfner—"

"Eh, some village gossip, I suppose?" said the old man with a hearty laugh, but a laugh that from his previous tone, sounded hollow and unnatural. "This Madeline is dead, then,—murdered by Gilbert Morgan?"

There was a strange hesitation in the widow's voice, and manner as she answered:

"She has never been seen since. Gilbert murteredt her—so they say. But, as Gott sees me, I never believed it, and tont believe it now—tat's all."

"Well, well, a queer story ! Little did I think when I pressed Gilbert's hand away in the Indies, that he'd been murderin' purty girls on the Wissa—Wissa—what d'ye call it ? Good night, Betsy,—see you again sometime—take care that poor Adam does n't come back, and take care of all strangers who are troubled with—spasms !"

Grasping his staff, the old man turned suddenly away, and with a hearty burst of laughter went toward the garden gate, his silvery hair floating on his shoulders, and his tall form, clad in rags, shone distinctly in the evening sunlight. He stood for a moment at the gate, gazing up the street and down, laughing heartily to himself all the while, and then suddenly dissappeared.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

HOW JACOPO SAW THE HORSEMAN IN GRAY ; AND THEN REASONED ACUTELY UPON A LIMB, A ROOF, AND A WINDOW.

"Jist look," cried Betsy to Jacopo—"Run and see if he has n't sunk in the groundt—"

Jacopo, however, being a Philosopher, calmly knelt at the widow's feet, and examined the golden coin, piece by piece.

"Good, all good. Doubloons, every one of them. Give yourself no anxiety, Betsy. It is not the Devil ; it's a livin' human being. Had it been the Devil, he would have given you counterfeit money or bank notes."

Consoled by this philosophic train of reasoning, the widow gathered the coin in her apron, and as the separate pieces rolled together with a musical clink, she muttered, as if by way of chorus—"Poor Adam ! Andt I should have been guilty of mahogany !"

Jacopo sat himself very near her, and in his usual felicitous manner attempted to lead the tearful Betsy into conversation. He laid his hand gently on her round arm, and endeavored to make her speak of the Haunted House. Betsy frowned, and pursed her lips at the very word. Next Jacopo spoke of Madeline. Betsy jumped from her seat, uttering a solemn ejaculation, which sounded very much like the monosyllable "Pooh !" Then Jacopo, as if determined to be agreeable or die in the attempt, whimpered dolefully a word or two in regard to the departed



Adam, who had left his luxuriant Eve, to pine in grass widowhood, in the cabin that nestled under the limbs of the oaken tree.

Betsy said "Tush!" and "Pooh!" in a breath, and then sailed grandly into the cabin, the gold pieces clinking with rich music, as she entered the door.

Lighting a pipe, Jacopo leaned his chair against the tree, and while the smoke curled round his face,—like incense hovering over the visage of some Hindoo idol—he allowed his soul to meander at pleasure, amid the mazes of a profound philosophical meditation.

"If I ever get over the events of this day, I will forswear the world, abandon the delights of polite society, and bury my genius and my sorrow within the drear walls of a Monastery. Nay—I will found a new order of monks—the holy Fraternity of "Puzzled People." That shall be their title; we'll say prayers in a Puzzling garden, and the only texts for our sermons shall be the Puzzles of this day. First, 'Who was the elderly man, who frightened Father Jacopo out of his wits, on the Wissahikon, and converted him into an itinerant Post-office?' Puzzler number one. Next and secondly, 'Who was the old man who brought the buxom Betsy some news of her absent Adam?' Third and lastly, 'The Haunted House, and what the deuce was in it?' There are three Puzzles, that will occupy my Fraternity of Puzzled People for at least three hundred years."

Thus ran the current of the Philosopher's thoughts, while gloomily before rose the Haunted House, scowling above the humble cabin of the forlorn widow. Jacopo's eye traversed the monotonous extent of that gable wall, and Jacopo's heart grew cold, as he thought of the adventure which was before him.

"I am to enter that dismal den.—How? Deliver this letter? To whom?"

The letter was in his hand; he examined once more its blank surface, and held its portentous seal close to the tip of his nose.

"I would like to read it, but it's dangerous to meddle with the correspondence of his Satanic majesty. Ah!" he exclaimed, raising his eyes, "That is a very important fact. There is but one window in the gable of the Haunted House: or rather a round hole, without a sash. That window may be reached from the top of the widow's cabin. And the top of the cabin, in its turn, may be attained by climbing this tree, and swinging from that crooked limb."

The solitary window, the top of the cabin, and the crooked limb, gave our Philosopher an unusual degree of satisfaction. Leaning against the tree, with his limbs on the table, and the pipe curling its mild incense around his nostrils, he did not move nor speak until the shades of evening began to darken round.

Then rising, he beheld the substantial form of Betsy, enthroned in the cabin door, her eyes twinkling brightly through the gloom.

"Betsy, my child, I will take a walk, and be back to supper in a few moments. I have an appointment to meet a Reverend friend, up the street. We have a theological point to settle, my dear, whether Roman papists have souls, and if they have, what is to be done with them. After supper, I will pursue my way. Have supper ready in five minutes, my love."

"Yes, Dominie," answered Betsy, somewhat won by the courteous manner and profound diction of the Reverend man.

Jacopo sauntered forth, and presently arrived at the lower extremity of Chew's Wall. The last gleam of day was playing over the verdure of that beautiful lawn, and the evening breeze stirred with low music among the trees.

But there—near the lower extremity of the wall—halting his horse by the roadside, was the unknown, whose tall form was wrapped from observation by a long gray overcoat. His hat was drawn over his eyes; he sat very calmly in the saddle, the rein thrown loosely on his horse's neck.

"Good evening, friend," said Jacopo, as he drew near, and attempted by a searching glance to gain some knowledge of the horseman's face: "You seem to enjoy the evening air?"

"You have a letter?" said the horseman, in a quick, abrupt tone.

Jacopo started back as though the horse had kicked him in the breast.

"That voice!" a thought flashed over him—"Can it be——"

"You have a letter—for me?" the Horseman said again; and Jacopo heard a scabbard clank against his boot, as the steed, covered with dust and foam, pawed the ground with his hoof—"The letter, I say!"

Jacopo drew it from his pocket and placed it in the stranger's hand, still anxiously endeavoring to catch a glimpse of his face.

"Stand off,—or my horse will kick you," and the Horseman, tearing open the letter, read it by the fading light—" '*The son of Gaspard—Michael lives!*' " he murmured, and then abruptly turned his horse's head toward the lane by which Jacopo had journeyed from Wissahikon.

"Here, fellow, is something for your trouble," he flung a gold piece in the dust, and sunk the spurs into the flanks of his steed. Even as Jacopo stood confounded and motionless, the horse dashed into the Wissahikon lane; not an instant passed ere horse and rider were lost to sight.

It was many moments before our Philosopher recovered his composure.

"It's *him*," he said, picking the gold piece from the dust—"I'd know that nose and those eyes among ten thousand!"

Absorbed in a train of novel and perplexing thoughts, Jacopo slowly passed the Haunted House—passed the wall, overhung by the foliage of the neglected garden, the hall door, scowling so dark and desolate upon the village street—and re-entered the widow's home.

The supper was spread upon the table under the oak; cheese and home-made bread, and toothsome ham, and a mug of spicy October. Betsy

was there, in all her charms; with a loaf in one hand, a knife in the other, she stood ready to do the honors of the table.

"Come, Dominie, here's your supper, Gott pless you—"

"Betsy, my child, your neighbor at the corner of the lane, wishes to see you for a moment. So she told me. You can go and see her, while I eat my supper. That's a dear woman."

Betsy, all unconscious of a Lie from the lips of the Reverend man, hurried through the gate, telling him in her good-humored way—"Make yerself at home, Dominie, and tont spare te vittels."

Jacopo listened intently for the last echo of her footsteps—glanced cautiously around—and then, with the stealthiness of the cat, combin with the agility of an ape, he sprang into the branches of the oaken tree.

It only required a moment to traverse the crooked limb; he stood upon the peak of the widow's cabin, with the gloomy window of the Haunted House within the reach of his arm.

Again Jacopo listened—his heart beat wildly—all was still and shadowy around—no voice nor ray came from the dark aperture, by which he was about to enter the mansion.

Jacopo hesitated; he cast a longing glance toward the crooked limb, and then his eye rested lovingly upon the supper, spread so temptingly beneath the leaves.

"Shall I return? I can escape to Philadelphia, and get beyond the reach of this Demon?"

Poor Jacopo was in his saddest Puzzle! To go forward was, perchance, to encounter the Devil in bodily form; but to go backward was—and no perchance—to meet the Gallows!

"I'll risk the Perchance!" said Jacopo, as he felt for the mysterious letter, in the depth of his pocket. "Now then, for the last Puzzle?"

Shivering all over as with an ague chill, he drew himself up to the window, and with a groan plunged into the garret, and into the darkness of the Haunted House.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

## THE VAGABOND AGAIN.

His heels had scarce disappeared within the window, when the footstep of Betsy—light and tripping for such a substantial beauty—was heard in the garden.

“Why, Dominie, how could you tell sich a fib,” she exclaimed, as she burst through the gate, “Tere aint nopody at home over the way, but the cat, andt—” she gazed wonderingly through the gloom, which was only broken by a broad streak of light pouring from her cabin door. “Got pless us! ‘The Dominie’s gone too!”

The Reverend man was indeed gone; but in his place at the table under the oak, appeared the tall figure of the old man, whose costume of rags, combined with his sudden spasms, had made such an impression on the good widow, not an hour before.

His cheeks resting on his hands, while his staff leaned against his chair, he sat beside the table, with his back turned to the light. His grey hair, stirred gently by the evening breeze, was only touched by a glimpse of light; all the rest of his form was wrapped in vague shadow. He did not heed the approach of the widow, nor raise his head, but remained as motionless as the trunk of the old tree, whose branches fluttered above him.

The widow started back when she first became aware of this unexpected Apparition, with as much terror as a thoroughly bred lady would experience at the sight of a spider dangling playfully before her nose.

“You here agin!”

The old man did not manifest the least consciousness of her presence.

“Did you put the Dominie in yer pocket?”

Still the same statue-like immovability; not a word or gesture from the ragged wanderer.

“He aint teadt is he? It aint decent to come and die dis way, afore a lone woman’s toor. It’s rale ornery—”

“Betsy,” the old man spoke, but in a tone so changed and deep, that the good woman felt an involuntary thrill pervade her veins at every accent; “I’ve been in the graveyard—”

“Lordt! He’s peen in the graveyard!” gasped the Widow sinking into a chair—“Toes he sleep there o’ nights?”

“I saw a white tombstone, very plain indeed, but to all appearance recently placed there. It bore neither the record of a birth nor a death, only

the simple words '*To the Memory of Madeline*?' There was no grave; no sign of a buried corpse.

"Beside this tombstone, I saw another, also new and white, and without a grave. '*To the Memory of Gilbert Morgan*.' Now, Betsy I want you to tell me what it all means? Gilbert Morgan I'm sure did not die in these parts, and as for this Madeline—is it the same of whom you spoke awhile ago?"

"The fery same," replied Betsy as the old man turned his head and bent the full light of his eyes upon her face, which illuminated by the rays from the cabin doorway, betrayed in every feature, a mingled and inexplicable emotion.

"Madeline is dead, then?" the voice of the old man was lower, deeper,—his gaze made Betsy afraid.

"To pe sure,—everybody says so," she replied, hesitating on every word.

"She is buried beneath that tombstone? You don't mean to say it?"

Thus speaking the old man rose, and grasped her firmly—rather rudely—by the wrist, as she stood in the centre of the belt of light.

Betsy shrunk, she knew not why from his intense look. She 'felt afraid' at the sound of his voice. So tall, so poverty-stricken, so way-worn, and yet in such an attitude of command, that white-haired old man stood before her, while the silence of evening was all around, grasping her by the wrist and urging his question, in a firm emphatic tone, that the good Widow felt her blood tingle and grow cold by turns, and at the same time could not turn her eyes away from his face.

"It's none of my pizness. Go a-way! Jist let go my handt if you please!"

The blood rushing once more to her face, she shone out in all her dignity, radiant as the full moon after an eclipse.

"Very well, my child,—” the old man laughed—"Just as you please. I'll light my pipe and go on my way."

And then with a cool impudence that thrilled Betsy to the heart, he strode very leisurely along the walk, and disappeared into the door of her cabin. She saw him, in a moment, in the act of lighting his pipe by her candle. She waited for him to come forth, but he did not seem to be at all hurried, for while the dame, in all the palpitations of fear and wonder, stood hesitating under the oak, a cloud of tobacco smoke rushed from the cabin door. Should she call the neighbors? Should she summon the magisterial dignataries of Germantown, to take the stranger into custody, and commit him to prison under a serious charge of poverty and rags?

"But ten he may tell the folks apout my poor Adam," was the thought of the widow, as boldly turning her steps to the door, she resolved to enter her cottage, and dare the worst.

She entered. A tallow candle, inserted in an iron candlestick, which

stood upon an oak table, revealed the cleanly features of the apartment, whose whitewashed walls sequestered Betsy's charms,—and eider—from the gaze of the profane world. It was the principal—almost her only room. It was cleanly to a fault. The walls were white as her kerchief; the floor scrubbed and sanded to the last extremity of cleanliness; from the open cupboard in one corner, her burnished pewter shone like silver; the very table on which the candle stood, looked as if Betsy had been polishing it, under the strong impression that it was made of some kind of precious metal, and would shine like a looking glass some day.

In the way of ornament, or luxury, there was a round Dutch clock hung in one corner, with its pendulum and chain, swinging away, over the whitewashed wall—free from any thing like a case—and reminding you of a transfixed beetle, dangling its broken legs in the air. A looking glass too, shone from the wall, near the clock, its walnut frame, adorned with a bouquet of roses, violets, and lilies, in the centre of which, by way of capping the climax, was placed a huge sun-flower. Over the broad but fireless hearth, hung two dingy and smoke-darkened engravings, one representing a Shepherdess, feeding her lamb, and the other picturing the renowned Doctor Faustus, in the act of selling his soul to the Devil.

These pictures were evidently the work of some Flemish artist, who—deluded by no vague idea of the ideal or spiritual in beauty—took for his rule, Bulk for Expression, and Quantity for Grace. The Shepherdess was a fat, blooming dame—more substantial even than the good Widow herself—and the lamb which she was feeding, was evidently a Premium Lamb, in its way, for it was lost in a wilderness of white wool, and seemed big enough to feed a whole corporation of Aldermen. As for Doctor Faustus he was a jolly Burgomaster, with cheeks like pippins and a nose like a red hot coal; the very Devil himself was inclined to fatness, and looked as if his only drink was beer.

Such was the apartment into which the ragged wanderer, had intruded with so little ceremony.

He was seated in the arm chair, near the table, anxiously perusing a slip of paper, which he held near the light. As he read, he smoked, and seemed determined not only to make himself perfectly at home, but to wrap his visage in an impenetrable fog of tobacco.

"Some folks seem to make 'emselfs at home—any how," said the Widow rather sarcastically.

"Betsy," said the old man without raising his gaze from the slip of paper, "How shall I get inside of the Haunted House?"

The question was asked very calmly—almost carelessly—and yet the Widow could not believe her ears. From some cause or other, not yet revealed to us, the very name of the Haunted House, made Betsy's dimples disappear in one ominous frown, while her capacious bust heaved



under the white kerchief, and the color went and came on her plump cheeks, with the rapidity of lightning.

"Wot did you say?" she cried,—rising, folding her white arms over her bust—and looking into the old Man's face with eyes like saucers.

"The Haunted House. That is what I said. How shall I get into it? You must know. You live next door. It would be funny if you did n't."

And the old fellow puffed and read, as if for a wager.

"Tont you know that house is Ha'nted? Tere's spooks and ghosts and te oldt Sam himself in it;" said Betsy waving the forefinger of her right hand with an ominous gesture.

"The very thing I'd like to see. Why bless your soul I never saw a ghost in my life. I'd sooner see one than eat my supper."

"Then go into it, and see 'em. I tont hinder you."

"Yes, yes, my good girl, but you *do* hinder me. How shall I get in?" looking keenly at her, from the shadow of his uplifted hand—"You ought to know?"

"Me!" cried Betsy in a spasm of virtuous indignation—"Do I look as if I had any thing to do with ghosts?"

She certainly did not. No ghost—save the Ghost of a Flemish painter—but would have been frightened at the exuberant life of her full moon face.

The old man rose, and advanced toward the hearth with a measured stride.

"This is a fine closet,—this between the fire-place and the wall," and as he spoke he turned the button of the closet door.

It did indeed seem as if these words and the accompanying action, had frozen every drop of blood in Betsy's veins. Her hands dropped on her lap; she muttered a prayer in German.

"Let's see what's inside o' 't," said the ragged wanderer. Betsy with colorless face and expanding eyelids, watched his every movement. He opened the door, and the closet, wide and roomy, with oaken panels, was laid bare to the light.

"Rather singular, Betsy, the back part of the closet, is bolted—d' ye hear? Bolted just like a door! Where does it lead you to?" the old man turned his face over his shoulder, and looked at her with a sneering grimace—"Into the next house, may be? Ho, ho, my girl did you think to fool me?"

Betsy slid from the chair upon her knees.

"Tont! Tont! For Gott's sake, tont!" she gasped, clasping her hands, while a mingled look of terror and entreaty convulsed her face—"You tont know what you do—you tont know what you do—" and she wrung her hands as she knelt upon the floor.

The old man with his finger on his lip, regarded her for a moment with a searching look.

"There is more in all this than meets the eye, by Jove !—" he advanced, and took the candle from the table, "By the Lord Harry, but I believe this paper tells the truth. We'll see."

Candlestick in hand, he entered the closet and drew the bolt, and at the same moment Betsy bounding from the floor, crossed the room with a spring, and grasped him nervously with both hands.

The old man started as he beheld the terror—the wild affright—the almost grotesque entreaty painted on her face

"If you go on I'll holler murter !" she whispered, clenching his right arm with both hands.

"Do so ! Call the neighbors, and after I've told 'em of poor Adam's death, I'll tell them that there's been a murder committed in the next house, and myself and the neighbors will go in together. Holler Betsy !"

The widow as if utterly unnerved by this threat relaxed her grasp, and fell back into a chair.

"Gott pity me ! Gott pity me !" and she wrung her hands, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH

### THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

THE old man drew the bolt, and the back panel of the closet opened like a door. Light in hand, he peered across the gloomy threshold, the rays streaming over his shoulders, and marking his figure in a bold relief against the darkness.

"A door cut through the thick stone wall into the Haunted House !" he muttered, and crossed the threshold.

Betsy as if driven to the last extremity of despair, uttered a groan,—a muttered prayer in German—and the old man thoroughly steeled against her groans and prayers, closed the door after him, and secured it by a bolt, which glided into the thickness of the wall.

"She's prayin'—" he murmured, listening at the panel—"What in the deuce is the matter with the good woman ?"

Raising the light, he examined the features of the place. There are certain faces, which strike you at first sight with an inexplicable feeling, which mingles terror the most instinctive with fascination the most irre-

sistible. You hate such a face at first sight, and yet cannot turn your eyes away from it. It suggests at once the idea of some terrible crime, or of suffering too deep for tears.

So in the depths of the forest, where withered leaves give their harsh echo to your lonely tread, and gloomy pines shut out the daylight from your face, you sometimes chance upon a scene that fills you with the same indescribable emotion of mingled terror and fascination. This scene may be a lonely pool sunken in the hollow of herbless rocks, and looking as if the foot of man had never profaned its solitude—it may be a cavern, hollow and vast, and agitated with the murmurs of dripping water—it may be a grassy glade in the thick woods, full of herbage and flowers, and yet so terribly still, so utterly isolated; without the hum of a bee to break its stillness, or the mark of a footprint to disturb its profound loneliness.

Still in every case this scene of nature makes its mark upon your soul; leaves there forever a sensation of fascination combined with terror.

If there are faces—if there are scenes in wild nature—that possess this singular power, so it has often seemed to me, there are chambers in old and deserted mansions that have a character all their own; that strike you at once with a shudder and a joy; that pervade your whole being with the memory of a vivid pleasure and the dim consciousness of a hideous crime.

It was a chamber such as this, in which the old man stood lifting the candle above his head.

It was wide and spacious. The ceiling was lofty; the walls panelled with sombre wood. Along the window,—looking perchance into the garden—hung curtains of rich texture and purple dye. The hearth was broad and roomy, and above extended the mantle, adorned with a thousand intricate carvings.

Such were the general outlines of the place, and yet it impressed the heart of the gazer, with that mingled feeling—a shuddering fear, an overwhelming fascination.

Had the thousand figures sculptured on the panelled walls, dusky now with dust and time ever witnessed scenes of misery—of crime—enacted upon the glittering mahogany floor? Had the lofty ceiling ever echoed the shrieks of outraged maidenhood, or the last, low, gurgling groan of life—life snapt in twain by the hand of Murder? That fire place so broad and roomy,—how many scenes had its fires lighted in days bygone, how many happy faces had clustered in its glow,—faces of the Child too new from Heaven to know Sin, of the Maiden just palpitating into Love, of the Aged waiting with gray hairs, and sluggish blood for Death to come and chill them into dust!

Thoughts like these steal on the mind in one of those ancient chambers of a deserted home. It seemed to the awed intruder upon this silent place, as if the isolated room—big with memories—had a Soul.



The old man looked silently about the place, while the candle held aloft in his right arm, cast its rays over his long, white hair, and beard waving on his breast: over his tall frame, clad in beggar's rags, and made a circle of light around him, leaving all beside in twilight obscurity.

"I have seen a Face, which reminds me of this room!" he said—and started at the sound of his voice.

The Face which he remembered had a terror also, for he trembled as he spoke of it; although his eyes grew more vivid in their light.

"This is the place," he said, "The very room of which poor Adam spoke as he died in my arms. 'I had thought to take advantage of *it* myself' he said,—how his white lips quivered, as the words were uttered with his passing breath! 'but I'll never see home agin'. Then he gave me this paper, and says he, 'if Betsy's alive be kind to her—don't let her come to want, comrade, or I'll haunt you, by ——!' About an hour after that he died."

The old man placed the light upon the mantel, and held before its rays the slip of paper, which he so anxiously perused not many minutes before. It was dingy and worn as though it had been handled many a time by rough fingers, and the characters traced upon it, were written in a bold yet rugged hand. The words which it bore were few,—without comma or period—and to all appearance without a meaning.

*Four rooms on the lower floor The Room next the garden south of the hall under the Harp*

"Under the Harp," murmured the old man, passing around the room light in hand, and examining with a keen glance the carvings which adorned the panels: "Here are angels and devils, and all sorts of odd images cut in black wood, but as for a Harp—hey? Let's see? Nothing o' th' kind here,—nor here—zounds! I must have mistook the room."

He traversed the room many times, not only perusing the panels as though they were the leaves of some precious book, but carefully examining the figures carved upon the mantel-piece, and raising the candle above his head, as he attentively surveyed the ceiling. His search was however in vain.

Nothing like the figure of a Harp met his gaze.

"Yet Adam believed in it; a straight story, too, and told just before he died. If I find it—if the story is true—if—if—curses upon that *if*!"

He clenched his right hand, pressed his nether lip between his teeth, and muttered an oath as he glided on tip-toe along the dusky floor.

"If! Then I may escape, yes escape from this——"

He paused; the words died on his tongue, as though a sudden memory had frozen his utterance. Trembling—writhing in every nerve—his face

distorted and his eyes sunken in their sockets—he seemed to struggle and struggle in all the bitterness of despair, with a more than mortal anguish.

“What ray of hope? Not one—not one! Like a man buried alive, I feel the coffin lid upon my breast, but cannot move.”

He placed the light upon the mantel, and covered his face with his hands.

We may not picture the full agony of that moment, nor reveal the cause of the old man’s measureless woe! Scalding tears were on his cheeks—with a curse he dashed them away, and raised his flashing eyes toward the light.

“I must be gone. I must leave this place. There is work for me,—a dog’s work and a devil’s wages!”

Turning away, his eye was arrested even as he raised the light, by a small hook which projected from the panel above the mantel. There was a belt suspended from this hook, a belt of many dyes, whose vivid contrasts glared upon him from the dark background of the wainscot. He seized the belt with an eager gesture; he held it to the light; it needed no second glance to ascertain its use and purpose.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH.

### THE BELT OF WAMPUM.

It was a Belt of Wampum, woven with those hieroglyphs which are letters, learning, Memory to the Red Man.

“The Belt of Yoconok!” he gasped, in a broken whisper.

Then, as if this wampum string, rich with the enigmas of the Indian’s history, brought home to him—the wandering beggar—some memory of his own life, in hues of terrible distinctness, he sank upon his knee and his head dropped on his breast. Upon the broad stones of the hearth he knelt, while the light from above shone upon his gray hairs, as they trembled with the strong impulse which shook his frame.

Before his fixed eyeballs, upon the very slab on which he knelt, the figure of a Harp appeared, sculptured in the dim red stone. He saw it, but heeded it not.

Impelled by some unknown but powerful cause, he had sought for it earnestly and long, but now that it was thrust upon his sight, he did not think it worthy of a moment’s thought.

The Wampum Belt, which he grasped with a quivering hand, carried his soul to other days; called up before him the face of the beautiful and—Dead.

“How came it here?” he gasped, “Whose work is this? Is it another trick of the Devil,—or can it be a token of forgiveness?”

Starting from the hearth he seized the light, his features quivering and his eye rolling wildly, as he hurried to the door of the chamber.

“I must search this den,” he cried, with an oath—“For the living I do not care, and as for the dead, there is one now sleeping in the sod who would not harm even me.”

Then out into the gloomy and silent hall, with its broad staircase and dusky wainscot, he hurried, and through the rooms of the lower floor, rooms stored with antique furniture, but still and breathless as the grave. Massive mirrors returned the rays of his candle in broken flashes; velvet carpets gave no echo to his frenzied step; pictures framed in gold and seen in mingled light and shadow, seemed to sneer and scowl as he went by.

Three gorgeous chambers were those on the lower floor, with dust and cobwebs upon their antique furniture; with their windows sealed from the light of sun or star; their very atmosphere breathing of desolation and decay.

The old man searched them all, and then his foot was on the wide staircase which led toward the upper rooms of the forsaken house. He listened—there was no sound. A night deeper and more death-like than the night without, reigned through the place. The old man went up the stairs, and reached the last step, when a sudden blast—like the air pouring through an open door—extinguished his light.

He was alone, in the thick darkness, alone in the intense night of that Haunted House. Haunted indeed to him, for the Wampum Belt which he grasped, evoked the Ghosts of memory, and he saw, even through the darkness, a pale face and a blood-bedabbled breast, as he had seen them in other days.

Clasping the railing of the staircase—afraid of his own footstep’s echo,—he peered through the darkness, while his heart leaped to his throat. Slowly, as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom, he became conscious that a broad window, at the end of the corridor was open, with a gleam of starlight and a breath of evening air stealing through its parted curtains. This window looked out upon the neglected garden.

There was a long pause of hesitation and doubt. The old man, completely bewildered by a train of irresistible emotions, aroused into life by sight of the Wampum Belt, knew not which way to turn. That vast, gloomy, soundless old mansion, struck him with a mysterious interest and yet with a creeping terror.

“Curses on it! The light is gone, and I don’t know which way to move. What hand opened that window? Can this dreary old place be



occupied? Shall I move forward, and—perhaps—fall over a coffin in the dark, or feel the bony fingers of a skeleton ag'inst my cheek."

Turning his face from the direction of the window, he peered into the darkness of the corridor, when lo! that darkness was broken by a sudden and quivering ray. A ray that flashed into the gloom, lighting up the dusky walls, and then was gone!

The old man held his breath, but felt his heart mount to his throat.

"Was it a fancy o' mine—I believe I'm goin' mad—"

That ray once more, flashing, not across the corridor, but from its farther extremity, and quivering in a long line over the dark floor, into the very eyes of the bewildered man!

"Hah! This passage does n't extend through the house like the one on the lower floor—only half-way—and it is terminated not by a door—no! That ray came through a curtain—I'd swear it."

Hurrying along on tip-toe, like a man who is conscious that the next moment may plunge him into some frightful surprise, he presently touched the curtain with his extended hands. He dashed it aside—his convulsed features, framed in the waving hair and beard, were bathed in a gush of light.

It was the light of a tall waxen candle, which illumined a silent and deserted apartment. Hesitating on the threshold, the old man took in the features of the place at a glance. Circular in form, hung with dark hangings, the ceiling lofty and the floor glittering like a mirror, this room presented vividly to his gaze, a table or altar, covered with a snow-white cloth, and thrown into bold relief by the sombre background.

In the centre of this altar the waxen candle, in a candlestick of silver; above from the dark wall, an image of the Saviour glowed in the light; and a massive volume lay open upon the altar cloth.

The old man advanced—wondering—pale—with every faculty of his soul dilating with an intensity of suspense. These objects—the table, the Crucifix, the Book—alone disturbed the sullen uniformity of the circular apartment.

"It's the Bible," he whispered, bending over the book, "An' that Image looks as if it came from a South American Church."

Clutching the Wampum Belt with unconscious force, the old man surveyed the apartment, while its silence and gloom imbued his very being with an awe which he endeavored in vain to dispel.

Hark! Was it a footstep—or the sound of the breeze, among these dim curtains? His arms dropped by his side; he bent his head, and listened—

Again that sound, like the echo of a footstep; it came near and nearer, it resounded beyond those hangings.

The old man glided back into the darkness of the corridor, and at the same instant that step was heard within the apartment, which he left.

There was a pause; an unbroken stillness; the old man, holding his

breath, in the very extremity of suspense, and—it may be—terror, listened by the curtains but dared not look through their folds.

How the images of his aroused soul—the images of memory—of crime—seemed to take shape, in that moment, and glare before him, through the night of the corridor!

At length he gathered courage: parting the curtains without a sound, he looked within.

A white form was kneeling before the white altar, beneath the Divine Image, with hands like marble, clasped above her head, whose long and flowing hair, fell on her shoulders, pure and beautiful as snow.

The face he could not see, but the white hands clasped above the head,—the pure skin of the half-covered shoulders, gleaming through the intervals of the waving brown hair—met his gaze and yet he could not for a moment believe that he beheld a living being.

It was the form of a woman, rounded and full, as though the bud of maidenhood, had just opened its leaves, and ripened into perfect bloom. The robe which clothed it, was white and loose and flowing and yet it could not hide the outlines of a shape, which slender and full of grace, was yet stamped in the rich mould of voluptuous loveliness.

Beneath the folds of the robe, the feet appeared, small and beautiful, and looking like marble, when contrasted with the dark floor.

It was like the image of a Marble Nun, kneeling in the Sanctity of some cathedral shrine; an image of deathless purity, centered among images of gloom and death.

It was no ghost; nor marble form, but a breathing and beautiful woman, full of life; with warm blood coursing through her veins. That glimpse of her shoulders, seen through the mazes of the brown hair, told the story of a young and beautiful shape.

And the poor wretch, clad in rags, clutched the curtains with trembling hands, and looked,—while a ray of light shining upon his eyeballs, showed that they flashed—grew dim with tears—and burned into life again.

Was it a voice that he heard? Low, whispering, scarcely audible, a voice breathing words of prayer.

Had the world been his to give, he would have given it, but to catch one glimpse of her face. She did not move—her hands above her dark hair, she seemed gazing into the face of the Crucified.

What name was that, mingling with her prayer? The wandering wretch who looked, and listened—with eyes, and ears and soul—felt the cold sweat start from his forehead.

It was the name of a Criminal; of a man doomed to walk the earth with a curse upon his soul; a man capable of the highest deeds but immersed in vices the most repulsive,—a Murderer.

And yet the unknown prayed for this wretch—but no, it could not be. The listener had not heard aright.

"O that she would rise, and look this way! It's worth ten lives to look upon that face—but no! It cannot be. I'm only dreamin'."

She rose, and took the light and gazed slowly around the room. And then passed through the hangings, and all was darkness. But he had seen her face, her neck and shoulders, with a gleam of the spotless breast, heaving above the ruffle of her loosened robe. She was gone, but that face was painted on the darkness—stamped upon his soul.

"By——!" he cried, sinking helplessly on the floor—"It's Madeline!"

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## CHAPTER THIRTIETH.

### THE OUTCAST IN THE CHAMBER OF MADELINE.

How long he knelt he knew not, but when full consciousness came back again, he found himself in the darkness, grasping the curtains of that lone room, with stiffened fingers, and clutching still—with his right hand—the Wampum Belt of Yoconok.

An hour may have passed since that bright Presence shone before the solitary altar.

"I must begone—" he muttered, pressing his hand against his damp forehead. "There is work for me yonder, among the hills—the hand that leads me, neither man nor devil can resist. But no! Not until I have found out the secret of this place—not until——"

There came a Thought which chilled every vein.

He rose, and as if guided by some strange instinct—or by Destiny—he soon discovered the passage by which the beautiful form, had entered the lone room.

Along this passage he stumbled, in the darkness of course, until he suddenly passed between the hangings, and found himself in a large and spacious chamber, where a single light—the waxen candle of the place of prayer—was dimly burning.

"It is the room above the one, by which I entered this house—" the thought flashed upon him, as he gazed around. "But where is she? Hah! Yonder,—in the arms of her Husband—or paramour!"

A strange thing it was to see that robust old man, stand so tattered and wayworn, in the mingled light and gloom of that luxurious chamber. Upon the threshold, his brow knit,—the eyes flashing with a look of omi-



nous brightness—his lips drawn tightly over his set teeth—there he stood, clenching his hands, as he surveyed the place.

The light stood upon an antique bureau, whose jet-black wood, was surmounted by a large mirror. That mirror, dimly glittering, reflected the bed which stood opposite, with snowy curtains drawn together,—the carpet of velvet—the hangings of crimson silk—and the wan haggard figure, standing on the threshold, the livid face, gazing in scorn upon all this splendor.

It certainly did not look like the Haunt of a Ghost. The harp near the curtained bed, was evidently swept by no spectral hand; that dress of black velvet, embroidered with gold was not intended to clasp the cold form of the dead; those jewels, scattered over the bureau were not designed to display their radiance, save upon the white brow or panting breast of a young and passionate woman.

—Even as I write, there is a picture of that scene before me. It is rudely sketched upon a blank space in the original Manuscript, from which this history is derived. Rudely sketched with pen and ink, and brown with age, and yet it makes its mark upon the soul.

It is but a picture of a wild and haggard figure—the very type of poverty and age—standing amid the hangings of a lofty and spacious room, and gazing with an indescribable scorn, upon its luxurious display. In one corner, a snow-white couch, with curtains closely drawn, glares from the darkness; and the scene is lighted by a solitary candle, which glitters into the smooth surface of a mirror framed in gold, like a star shining into a waveless pool. The Harp, the costume of velvet, the jewels on the bureau, all are sketched; and from the curtains of the bed, appears a hand and arm, which at once enchain your gaze with their faultless outline. Indeed, gaze upon the picture as often as you will, your eye at last alternates between that haggard face, and the half-revealed arm of the unknown sleeper.—

“Sleeping? Hah! The sound of her breath, and *his* mingling together. A look by Jove, only one, ho, ho! Satan peepin’ into Eden—”

Half-muttering these words, the aged vagabond or outcast, as you will, drew near the bed, his hand wandering—instinctively perchance—to the knife whose hilt appeared at his girdle, among his rags. He reached forth his hand to grasp the curtain, but as suddenly withdrew it, and started backward, as if swayed by a new impulse.

Treading on tip-toe he approached the antique bureau. His haggard face was reflected vividly in the mirror, by the rays of the candle. He recognized it with a grim smile, indeed his laughter deep and mocking and but half suppressed, sounded unlike the mirth of a human being.

“Ho! What have we here! Letters,—ah, ha! Let me make myself at home, and peruse at my leisure these precious memorials of love!”

This man so uncouth in his attire, so various in his speech—now uttering the broken words of deep and sincere emotion, now sneering at his very agony, and turning his Fear into a jest—reached forth his hand, and grasped a mass of manuscript, which was laid upon the cloth of the bureau, among the jewels.

“A fine hand, too,—delicate and woman-like! Confessions of love for the Rich and Titled, mingled with curses for the outcast and murderer. By the Fiend!” he pressed his hand suddenly to his forehead. “It seems to me that this is some feverish dream!”

Then seating himself in an arm chair, with its high back between the light and the bed, he glanced over the manuscript. While the sound of the sleeper’s breath, broke softly on the deep silence, the old man gazed eagerly upon those pages, which seemed to reveal the mystery of a Woman’s Life. On the first page, in a hand tremulous yet bold was written, title of the Manuscript.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIRST:

### CONFESSION OF MADELINE.

“How shall I ever recall the events of that fatal night! My blood chills at the memory, and yet a fascination which I cannot resist impels me to make the record.

“Afar from my native land, surrounded by scenes of luxury and splendor, my heart pants for—Home! Home! In all the world there is no home for me but Wissahikon. Could I but drink of its waters once more,—stand for a moment among its rocks and trees, and sunlight and shadows—the next moment I would be willing to die. Then a grave amid those scenes of Wissahikon! Alas! Alas!——”

When the old man had read thus far he laid down the Manuscript and covered his face with his hand. Many moments elapsed before he resumed the reading.

“Let me, by recording the events of that fatal night, endeavor to bring home the rocks and trees of Wissahikon! Strange and mysterious events—was ever fate, so dark and yet so inexplicable as mine?”

—The reader paused again, and cast his flashing eye toward the bed on which the unconscious sleeper lay.

“It’s no dream,” he muttered “I’m awake I believe !—”

“I remember unclosing my eyes, in that familiar room of my childhood’s home, and even now, I can see *his* face lowering upon me, as I lay stretched upon the floor. That was a fearful look—like madness—which stamped his features, as awaking from my swoon, I reached forth my arms to *him* and murmured, Gilbert! And yet he stabbed me——”

—The paper dropped from the old man’s hands. He saw his face in the glass, those sunburnt features framed in white hair, and livid as death, and started back, as though horror-stricken at the Image of his soul, painted in the glittering mirror. Again a pause ensued. Still the sleeper rested in her luxurious couch, unconscious that the eyes of a wanderer, an outcast, had profaned the sanctity of her chamber.

“Consciousness returned once more. I awoke—looked around—the room of my childhood’s home was gone. Could I believe my senses—was I enveloped by the horrors of a nightmare? A pale blue light shone in my face, as I awoke, and gave a ghastly radiance to the arches and pillars of a grave vault. Yes, my form unclothed, my limbs arranged in the attitude of death, I was about to be shut up forever in the slumber of the grave. Nay—I was buried already—the arches of my tomb were around me; that pale light, was the ghastly meteor, which hovers over the festering decay of the charnel.

“The horror of that moment I shall never—never forget !

“I started up, and dragged my stiffened limbs over the cold floor, and felt a sharp pain shoot through my bleeding breast. I was buried alive. —Thank God! There was an open door, yes the entrance of the tomb was open. I hurried through into the cold and darkness, and without knowing whither I fled, ascended stairway after stairway, and fell fainting at last upon a bed, which stood in the shadows of a large and gloomy chamber. I had escaped the grave—I knew no more——

“After a troubled sleep, broken by a frightful dream,—in which I saw *his* face and the uplifted knife—I woke once more, and became conscious that a woman’s form was slumbering at my side. I reached forth my arm, and with a shriek the unknown woman bounded from the bed. Looking through the curtains I saw her stand, so beautiful in the centre of the gloomy room—It was the Wizard’s daughter! That lovely girl, whose face I had often seen, in the forest, although—as she swept so proudly by me—I had never exchanged a word with her.

“The truth rushed upon me; I was in the house of Isaac the Wizard. My heart was ice—an overwhelming fright, made me tremble from head to foot. I remembered the scene of the night before, when in the silence of the wintry woods, beside the dead body of Yoconok, I met the pale old man, Isaac Van Behme. I remembered his prediction, as he took my



hand, and chilled me with the wild unnatural look of his eyes—*“No Bridal Ring shall ever cross this hand. No child shall ever bless your sight. I read it in the lustre of your eye, which is lighted by the fire of a changeless Destiny! Alas! Alas! I pity and rejoice! Dishonor and a Sudden Death will soon be yours!”*”

—The old man raised his eyes; he was trembling from head to foot like a withered leaf. His visage displayed at once a kind of rugged sympathy mingled with a vague amazement.——

“This was the Prophecy, which he had uttered only the night before. What fearful, what incredible events had followed that Prophecy! Not Dishonor, no! no! Temptation is not sin; we may look over a dizzy height and not fall——”

—“Madeline!” muttered the old outcast, when he had read this sentence, “Thank God! Thank God!——”

“But the wound inflicted by Gilbert’s hand was still bleeding; my breast was stained with clotted blood. And now, for what was I reserved? The supernatural atmosphere investing the very name of the Wizard—the wild stories told about the hearths of Wissahikon, concerning his compact with the Fiend—his Prophecy uttered to me, only the night before, a Prophecy almost fulfilled by events so sad and appalling—thoughts and memories like these filled me with terror worse than death itself.

“Meanwhile the Wizard’s daughter, pale and beautiful and convulsed with affright stood in the centre of the room, rending the air with her shrieks. Two figures appeared, Black David, the miserable deformed of Wissahikon——”

—The old man uttered an ejaculation, and bent down to the MSS. with a more intense interest flashing from his eye.——

—“And Isaac the Wizard. I can only remember that with the blood oozing from my breast, I sprang from the bed, and clutched the beautiful girl by the knees. Save me! Save me! These words I uttered and then all was a blank,—a blank only disturbed by the never-fading vision of Gilbert’s face, convulsed with the purpose of Murder, and Gilbert’s arm quivering the knife above my naked breast.”

—“This Gilbert must have been an infernal scoundrel,” said the old man, with a sardonic smile. “I should like to meet him some day!” And then he laughed to himself as though he had uttered an excellent jest, and turned to the Manuscript again.——

“How well I remember it, that day when the dream passed away, and I found myself stretched upon a comfortable couch, with the air of spring, fresh with the breath of violets, blowing gently through the unclosed window of a large and luxuriously furnished apartment. My room in the Haunted House of Germantown!”

—“Hah! The Haunted House!” ejaculated the reader.——

“Then first appeared my unknown friend, that kind Protector, who

has since wound himself about my heart by innumerable acts of kindness, but whom still—it is ungrateful, it is wicked! I can never look upon, without a tremor, a shudder.”

—It was terrible to see the expression which darkened the old man’s face, as grasping the Manuscript with both hands, he held it closer to his eyes, devouring every word with a gloating intensity.—

“He drew near my bedside. How well I remember the impression made upon me by his face, his form! While the sun was stealing through the unclosed window, I saw a man of some sixty years, with short gray hair and a pale melancholy face, stand near me, with his hands upon his breast. His attire, which indicated by its fashion and texture, the gentleman of rank or wealth, could not altogether conceal the defects, I cannot say, deformities of his shape. As he advanced, I saw that he was lame; his limbs mis-shapen, and his broad shoulders rising in an unsightly hump. But his face, so pale,—so steeped in melancholy—the forehead bold and high, with a single lock of gray hair falling down the centre; his lips wearing a sad yet gentle smile, the eyes seeming as though they did not shine, but burn in their sockets.—I could not help being won to that face, and at the same time I regarded it with a shudder. Such was my first impression of that kind friend, who has been to me, Father, World, Home; who has unclosed to my soul the golden worlds of Music, Painting, Poetry; who has borne me from land to land, and taught the poor Orphan Girl of Wissahikon to mingle unabashed with the throngs of fashion, the liveried crowds of a royal court. Still, one drink from the waters of the Wissahikon were worth it all!”

—“Wissahikon! It’s a sweet word, and yet you were stabbed there, girl, by the hand of this Gilbert—this murderer.” The old man did not wipe away the tear that rolled down his cheek. He read on; the Manuscript revealed a strange escape from the grave.—

“He, my more than friend, near my bed—even now I hear his voice, whose tones charm the soul like bursts of subdued music:

“‘The hand of the Murderer struck in vain. You are weak and faint, my child, but the wound is healed. Well was it for you that his hand trembled!’

“‘But Gilbert,’ I cried, raising myself languidly upon my bed—‘Gilbert!’ They have loaded him with chains, they have hurled him into prison. O, hasten to him; let him be free! He was my friend, almost my Husband—’

“‘Gilbert,’ said my Protector, ‘*Gilbert is dead.*’

“‘I heard no more. It was a long time before I unclosed my eyes.’

“‘And thou, fair child, shalt leave these scenes. I will be to thee as Father; thou shalt be my Daughter. These people who have wronged thee, shall never behold thy face again. Wilt thou go with me to the end of the world?’

"His gaze penetrated me with an inexplicable fascination. I could not help it—I stretched forth my arms, and said, 'Father!' The tears rolled down his cheeks, and then he muttered wildly to himself.

"How was I saved—I asked.

"On that night I was journeying through the forest of Wissahikon, when a poor deformed wretch placed in my arms the body of a half-naked, and almost lifeless maiden. *Black David gives thee this*—he said, with a wild laugh, and disappeared.'

"Black David! The poor deformed! He saved my life then—saved me from the Wizard—'

"Black David is dead,' said my Protector, in a mournful tone, and then told me how he had borne me to this house, keeping my very existence a secret from the village folk, while himself and a kind-hearted woman watched by my bedside. It was many days before I recovered my strength. One night we left the 'Haunted House,' and since that hour my heart has never ceased to long for Wissahikon."

When the aged man had read this passage, he started from the chair and drew near the bed, whose curtains enshrined the sleeper.

"Black David was more merciful to you than Gilbert!" he muttered—and touched the white hand as it projected from the curtains. Touched the hand, with a gentle and respectful movement, even as a Devotee would press the hand of a marble divinity.

"Sleep on, sleep on," muttered the Outcast, as the sound of her breath stole on the stillness, "You can sleep in safety, for Gilbert, the Murderer, is dead."

Gliding back to the light, he contemplated the Manuscript of Madeline with a look of profound emotion.

"There's much food for thought in your words, young girl, and it makes a man's brain boil like hot lead, but to read your sufferin's. One more glance, and then I'll go. What business has the devil in Eden?"

Once more he took up the Confessions of Madeline.

"How shall I ever record that scene. There are no words in human speech to describe it; even now, the memory of that incident perplexes and confounds me. It occurred on the Twenty-Third of November, 1775. We were sitting in our quiet home among the hills of Yorkshire. The leaves were falling; from our window, a wide sweep of brown heath stretched sullenly toward the river shore, and the mists of autumn curled slowly about the distant hills.

"My Protector was unusually sad.

"My child,' said he, seating me in a chair before him, and taking my hands within his own, 'This is a day dedicated to an awful memory. The blackest day in the long calendar of three hundred years.' His eyes assumed a strange glassy intensity; they were fixed upon me with over-



whelming power. 'On this day, sinless virgin, thou mayst save a soul, which without thee, will be lost forever.

"His voice went to my heart. And yet, strange as it may seem, I fell asleep, even while he held my hands and looked into my eyes. My eyelids grew weary; I struggled and wrestled with the slumber which came over me, but in vain. It was not sleep, in the familiar sense. No! My body was numbed; paralyzed; I could not move a finger, but my Soul was awake, free, and full of life. O, the calm delight of that moment! I was conscious that my Protector was there; I heard his voice, felt his presence, and yet my body was paralyzed in a strange, unnatural sleep. But my soul: it was like a bird suddenly set free, soaring into the sky, high and higher, with unbroken light upon its wings. Then it was like a waveless Lake, set in the hollow of some mountain top, without a breeze to stir its glassy surface, even into the faintest ripple, without a sound to break the profound stillness of its borders,—calm, calm,—unutterably calm.\*

"Then a new consciousness crept over me. It seemed to me that the Soul of my Protector talked with mine; that I heard the Thoughts of his soul, *spoken in a voice without a sound; such a voice as we imagine when reading a favorite book alone*; it was, in a word, as though his Soul had taken the place of mine, filling my whole being with its power.

"While in this state, an incident—or shall I call it a vision? took place, which I have never been able to comprehend or explain. Let me record it as it appeared to me; it is beyond my hope to depict either its causes or its full details; some broken glimpses of that incident—that Truth or Dream—are all that the poverty of words enable me to describe.

"Thus it seemed to me:

"My Soul escaping from the body, which sat dumb and paralyzed, in the chair before my Protector's gaze, My soul traversed a space of some hundreds of years back into time, and hovering invisible in the air of a half-lighted chamber, beheld a deed which took place in the Sixteenth Century.

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\* Was this magnetism? The Author has experienced sensations precisely similar, while in 'the magnetic state,' as it is technically termed. Some years ago, he was magnetized by the learned and eminent Dr. Nott, President of Union College, a man above suspicion of trickery or deceit of any kind. The sensation was one of unutterable calmness; the Physical Being in a state of paralysis, while the Mind was in possession of all its powers, and as clear and serene as a sky without a cloud. There are, indeed, no words in language to express this state; you might as well try to paint a finished picture with brick dust and a dry stick, as to attempt the delineation of the *magnetic sleep* by the words of human speech. At the same time, the author frankly confesses, that he would not believe any thing like magnetism, had he not experienced a portion of its phenomena in his own person. G. L.

"It was in a room in some guard old Feudal Castle, lighted by a single lofty and pointed window, which looked to the western sky, where huge white clouds, were glowing in the setting sun. Even now I can see that chamber, with high ceiling and dark purple tapestry,—nay I can feel the atmosphere of gloom, which seemed to brood over its antique splendor, even as the broad gleam of sunshine, came through the casement. There was the effigy of a Knight in armor, near the window, glittering sullenly in the light; and in the shadows stood a massive couch, overhung with drapery, and crowned with a Lordly crest.

"Near the window, where the sunshine was brightest sat a woman of surpassing beauty, clad in black velvet, embroidered with gold, with her hair, falling unrestrained over her shoulders. She did not look like an English woman; there were no looks of golden hair, twining about a sunny face. No! Her hair was black as jet; her eyes large, dark and wildly brilliant; her pale forehead, shaded by the jetty hair, was invested with a lofty, almost hallowed beauty. She was very young; her form, so fragile and girlish, seemed to tell the story of seventeen summers, but her face, pale and beautiful, stamped with unspeakable grief, indicated that in suffering at least, she had already lived a life-time.

"And upon her young breast—it was bare, and her black robe, made it seem whiter than marble—hung a babe, not more than three months old. A very tiny thing, that slept so calmly in the sunset rays, and laid its little marble hand, upon its young mother's midnight hair.

"No words can tell how passingly beautiful this lone woman and her babe, seemed to me; the babe smiling in its sleep; the mother so sad and thoughtful amid all this splendor.

"Suddenly I became conscious of another form. It was a man, dressed in a garb, that mingled strangely the costume of the Monk with the soldier. He came from the darkness, stole softly behind the Mother, and then I saw his face. The sun shone upon it; I beheld it, and it is before me now in clear, distinct and terrible outlines.

"*It was the face of my Protector!* but oh! how changed, how distorted as with the conflict of infernal passions!

"He stood behind the Mother's chair—unseen and scowling—his lip tightening as he saw the babe, nestling upon her white breast. Then I heard his voice—"

"*'Leola my wife, this is the Twelfth of November, he whispered—'Dost thou remember last year?'*

"Before she could turn her face to look upon him, nay before her parting lips could frame a word, his arm rose above her head—a sharp blade flashed in the air—and the face of the child, was covered with blood; blood which spouted from the mother's breast. Yes, the blade was buried to the hilt—the golden hilt, which shone upon that snowy breast, amid the gushing blood, as if in very mockery of the deed.

"The young mother did not fall; she did not even stir. But even as she sat there in the chair, grasping her babe, she raised her eyes to her Husband's face and died. Her lips moved just before her eyes grew fixed and glassy—I would have given the world to have heard her words—but her voice was inaudible. She spoke to *him* as she died, but that low whisper melted unheard upon the air."

"And the Husband, now convulsed with a Remorse as terrible as his Crime, bent over the dead body, as it sate erect, and with repeated outcries, seemed determined to wrench *her last words*, from her pale cold lips.

"At this moment, I heard the *voice* of my Protector's *soul*, speaking to *mine*. Yes, it may seem extravagant,—mad—but while my Protector clasped the hands of my unconscious body, his Soul spoke to mine, even as that Soul was an invisible witness to a terrible scene of a long past age. And these are the words, which that soundless voice spoke to me :

"Madeline ! Thy soul is now a silent witness of the Deed which took place centuries ago. Thy soul now hovers above his guilty face—above her mangled form. Tell me, O tell me in the name of the Murdered Mother, and remember the fate of an immortal soul hangs on thy answer, tell me, didst thou hear the *last words* which quivered on her lips, ere she died ?"

My soul framed its answer :

"No ! No ! Her lips moved, but her words I could not hear !"

"Then the entire scene passed away. The vision, or the spell, term it what you will, passed away. I awoke ; the blood stirred in my veins with a slow, languid motion ; I unclosed my eyes, and found myself sitting in the chair, with the hands of my Protector—my Father shall I call him ? clasping my arm.

"Never shall I forget the expression of his face ! His eyes burned with more than mortal lustre, his features were horribly distorted ; his quivering lips were spotted with foam, and the lock of gray hair, swept aside from his forehead revealed the cicatrice of a hideous wound, in the form of a Cross.

"Go to ! Go to ! Thou couldst not hear her *last words* ? Is it so ? Then the blood of Leola does not course in thy veins—thou art not of my race—some beggar's offspring, I trow, left by thy gipsy mother, in the woods of Wissahikon !"

"As his face, deformed by unnatural agony, writhed before my gaze, it seemed—shall I write it down, that vague improbable suspicion ?—yes it seemed to me, that I did not behold my kind Protector, my Father, but Black David, the poor Deformed of Wissahikon.

"He turned away with curses, and fell insensible at my feet, his eyes glassy, and the white foam hanging about his lips."



—The old man lingered over this passage, while his eyes, sunken beneath his white brows, glimmered with a sombre and glassy light. Not a word passed his lips; the emotion which convulsed his frame, was only indicated by his heaving chest and corrugated features. He turned to the last paragraph of the Manuscript. It was dated June first, 1777.—

“Wissahikon! I have not seen it yet, but soon—very soon I hope to stand among its leaves and flowers, and drink of its waters. Once more I find myself wrapt in the solitude of the Haunted House—my Protector, leaves me for hours, for days alone. When I beseech him to permit me to see the Wissahikon once more, he answers—always in the same words, and with a strange, sad smile, ‘Not yet, not yet. Wait my child; the appointed time will soon be here.’

“To-day as I was thinking of ‘the old times,’ when the poor Orphan Girl dwelt in the woods of Wissahikon, without a care, I fell asleep and dreamed a strange dream. The branches of those dear old trees, were once more over my head; I was seated upon the moss, beside ‘the Indian Spring’ whose clear waters sparkle in the hollow of a rock. Every thing seemed full of peace; bees were humming in the wild flowers; birds sang in the trees, a wild tremulous song, that burst upon me like music from Paradise; the sunshine came through the thickly woven branches, and a single ray shone down into the bosom of the spring. I was happy, O it seemed to me as if my heart rose with the notes of the bird, and soared away in thankfulness to God. Gilbert was there, dressed in his plain hunter’s costume, with his rifle on his knee, as in the days of old. Nay the Wampum Belt which Yoconok gave me was clasped in our joined hands, as a token of unbroken faith, and I looked into his frank honest face, without a fear. There was no sorrow upon his features, and as his eye, rested upon me, he told me in a low voice how he would build a cottage in the woods, and I should be his little wife and——. But at this point of my dream, a drop of blood, fell from the branches of the tree, into the very bosom of the spring. That drop widened slowly, until the clear water in the rocky basin, looked like a pool of blood. I gazed upward in horror, and among the branches saw a hand, grasping a dying Dove, and crushing it slowly to death. It was the hand of Peter Dorfner: I saw his face, grinning in triumph, among the leaves. Even as I looked, another face was there, framed in the leaves, the visage of my Protector,—his lips were impressed with a cold sad smile, his eyes were fixed upon me, with a look that chilled my blood. I started up in horror, and flung my arms around Gilbert’s neck, beseeching him to save the dying Dove from the grasp of its murderer, when a hand was lightly laid upon my shoulder, and a low deep voice, breathed my name. Turning my head, even as I clung to Gilbert’s breast, I saw the face of Reginald—”

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SECOND.

## MADELINE AND THE OUTCAST.

HERE the Manuscript abruptly ended. The name of Reginald was the last word.

The old man, sat perfectly motionless, absorbed in thought. One hand, grasping the Manuscript shook with a nervous tremor; the other, shading his eyes, could not conceal the tears which rolled one by one, over his sun-burnt face.

And while he sat before the mirror,—an image of poverty and wretchedness, encircled by the dim splendor of that chamber—the sound of the sleeper's breath broke gently on the stillness, mingling with his half-uttered groans.

"Reginald!" he whispered, "And who is Reginald? Ah, a light breaks in upon me! Soh,—good girl, it was Reginald, who put his hand upon your shoulder as you clung to Gilbert's neck? And you think kindly of Gilbert, too, but your 'Confessions' end with the the name of Reginald. That means a great deal; a world o' meanin' in that word—"

The outcast rose, and with unsteady footsteps approached the bed. His lips moved without a sound, as he went, and once or twice his hand wandered instinctively to the hilt of his knife. Presently he stood beside the couch, his face turned from the light, gazing in silence upon the beautiful hand and arm, which appeared among the white curtains.

"An' that hand has toyed with Reginald's chesnut curls, as his kisses warmed her lips!"

Trembling from head to foot, the old man parted the curtains and looked within,—his right hand all the while laid upon the hilt of his knife.

In the mysterious twilight of the curtained couch, she slept, her cheek resting on her bent arm, her dark brown hair, rising and falling with the pulsations of her half-uncovered breast. The fringes of her closed lids lay darkly on her cheek; her parted lips, gave a glimpse of her teeth; a flush like an opening rose-bud bloomed upon her face. Her form, presenting in its every outline, a type of ripened womanhood, lay motionless as Death beneath his gaze.

Even as the Fiend, looked in upon the sleep of sinless Eve, parting the leaves which shielded her form, as his breath polluted her cheek, so this wan and haggard Outcast drew aside the curtains, and glowered with ominous eyes, upon the slumber of poor Madeline.

"Madeline!" he whispered.

She stirred in her sleep, and her robe falling lower on her shoulder, dis-

closed the livid scar which marred the beauty of her bosom. The sight of that fatal scar, seemed to madden the Outcast.

"Madeline!" he hissed the word in her ear, and grasped her roughly by the wrist—"Awake! Awake!"

She started up in the bed, and unclosed her eyes.

"God pity me!" she whispered, shuddering as she drew her white arms over her breast. "This is some frightful dream!"

Between her and the light rose the tall form of the Outcast; she but dimly discerned his face, but his eyes, flashing with unnatural lustre, penetrated her very blood, with an icy shudder. She did not shriek, nor groan, but folding her arms over her breast, gazed upon that terrible Apparition with a vacant stare.

"Madeline—" said the Outcast, and his voice was broken and faint like the voice of an aged man, "I have a message for you from Gilbert Morgan!"

"Gilbert Morgan? Who are you that speak to me of Gilbert Morgan?"

She looked very beautiful, as clad in her loosened robes, as white as snow, she crouched upon the edge of the bed, and gazed wonderingly into the Outcast's face, very beautiful, but her cheek was colorless, her eyes wildly brilliant with terror, while her bosom rested beneath her folded arms, without pulse or motion.

"Come, Madeline, sit by me: I will tell you of Gilbert Morgan," said the old man, and with no rude grasp, he took her by the hand and led her from the couch toward the light.

She sank into a chair, never once removing her frightened gaze from his face, while her clasped hands gathered her robes over her breast, and her brown hair falling to her shoulders, made her cheek seem pale and death-like.

He sat in the shadow with his hand raised to his brow, and his burning gaze centred upon her countenance.

"Gilbert Morgan?" she said, as she endeavored to collect her wandering senses. "What mean you? Ah! Old man, your gaze fills me with terror! Do not harm me, do not for the sake of Heaven!"

"Harm thee?" returned the Outcast, in a faint and broken voice—"The old man is weak; he could not harm thee if he would. Thy hand, young girl, can crush him into dust, even a hand so small and delicate as thine. Listen Madeline! The good woman, who lives in the cabin next door, gave me entrance to this house, and I made bold to enter your chamber: for I have a message—a message of life and death, from Gilbert Morgan!"

Faint and fainter his voice became; the last words were pronounced in a whisper. At once, Madeline's terror and her paleness passed away. Her cheek flushed, her bosom heaving, her eye radiant with delight, she started from her chair, and laid her hands upon his arm.—



"Then Gilbert is not dead," she cried—"He lives! Tell me,—he lives?"

The Outcast did not reply. So radiant and yet so pure, in her womanly beauty, she trembled there, her hands laid upon his arms, while her eyes lighted up with all a woman's soul, that the old man, touched to his very heart-strings by the sight, turned his face away, and with his toil-worn hand brushed away a tear.

"He lives. That is, Gilbert lives. He sent me to you. And he sent this token, so that you might know me for *his* messenger."

From his rags he drew forth the token, a hunting knife with a handle of bone, and a long blade, darkened at the point by a blood-red stain.

"This a token from Gilbert to me?" Madeline's face became pale again; she started back, and regarded the old man with a dilating eye. He held the knife toward her, but her hand shrunk back, and the fatal weapon fell at her feet on the rich carpet, with a sullen sound.

His voice was broken, husky, as he replied :

"Yes, a token from a Murderer to his victim. He stabbed you with that knife, young girl. You know it! Stabbed as you called him by name, and reached out your arms to clasp his neck." He paused—hesitated—and continued—"That's the only token from a poor devil like Gilbert, to a lady so rich and beautiful as you, my girl!"

"And Gilbert lives!" murmured Madeline, with an absent glance. "Is this no dream? They told me that he was dead—"

"Dead: worse than dead," answered the Outcast—"A man that's dead sleeps in his grave, and nothin' troubles him. Winter and storm, summer and sunshine, pass on, but still he's there—safe under ground—at rest. But as for Gilbert, he's not dead, but only buried alive. That's all."

"Buried alive?" echoed Madeline.

"Yes, he's dead, forever dead to peace,—to quietness—to what the good folks mean when they use these words, '*a heart at rest with God and man.*' He only lives to do the devil's work; he's only awake to crime. And then it's his curse to go about the earth, like a ghost, bound by a frightful oath, never to permit any one to know him as Gilbert Morgan. Do you understand, girl? He may see the graves of his father and mother, hidden in the corner o' th' graveyard, without a stone to mark their resting place, and he dare not shed a tear over their ashes, dare not plant a flower there, lest somebody might know him for Gilbert Morgan. Did you ever hear of one condemned to walk about the earth, among his friends,—the scenes of his boyhood—invisible to every one, and at the same time seein' and hearin' everythin', without the power to speak? Gilbert Morgan's that man!"

"And who," faltered Madeline, and she felt a strange sympathy mingled with abhorrence or fear, while she gazed upon the old man—"And who has laid this doom upon him?"

"Hush! Do not speak so loud. *He* may hear you," whispered the Outcast, with a low, mocking laugh, and yet with an accent of undisguised terror.

"He? Of whom do you speak?" asked Madeline, her blood chilled by the unnatural laugh, and shuddering tone of the old man.

He bent forward, while the light fell upon his white hair—eyebrows and beard—and showed the contrast between these and his sunburnt features and brilliant eyes. He glanced from side to side with a stealthy look.

"Don't you know who I mean?" he whispered—"That Devil in human shape, or rather that Fiend's soul in only a half-human body, who puts his witchcraft upon you, an' takes away your power over your own will, and fills your brain with his own Soul. Cant you guess his name? He may be far away from you,—and you may know it—and yet there are moments when you feel that his soul is present with you, like a cloud from —, or when his Will stirs in your brain, and makes your hand perform deeds that your heart abhors. Don't you know yet?" he hissed the words between his set teeth, as the affrighted girl shrunk from his fiery gaze—"He's sometimes called Black David, and sometimes Mr. Rolof Sener, and again ——— but no! no! I dare not speak *that* name!"

Madeline's face resembled the visage of a dead woman, while her eye burned like a flame. A shriek died half uttered on her lips.

"Rolof Sener!" she whispered—"My Protector—my father!"

"Yes—yes—*Black David*, your Protector! Rolof Sener, your father! Why, girl, I could tell you a story o' that Fiend, that would drive you stark, starin' mad. Do you ever pray, girl—" his voice grew husky, choaking—"Do you ever kneel at night, and ask God with a free heart to bless you? Then I beg of you, sometimes pray for Gilbert Morgan, who is sold body and soul to the Fiend in human shape, Rolof Sener!"

"Do I ever pray?" said Madeline, a burning flush visible in her death-like cheek—"Why he has often besought my prayers. He, Rolof Sener, has many a time sat in this very room, listening while I have read from the Bible—read those words which make the dying heart feel strong again, and nerve the weary soul with life from God."

"And yet—" the low, mocking laughter of the Outcast broke on the stillness of the chamber, with a hollow emphasis—"And yet you remember 'the 'Twelfth of November,' do you? 'The dyin' mother stabbed, while her baby slept upon her breast? And Rolof Sener sittin' near you, holdin' your hands as your Soul—*by his will, mark ye*—saw this crime, committed by *him*, three hundred years ago?"

Madeline was silent; the solitary flush which had warmed her cheek died away; she fixed her large eyes, flashing with wild lustre, upon the half-shadowed face of the Outcast, and clasped her hands, her lips moving, trembling—but without a sound.

"Is this man or devil?" cried the Outcast—"This *Protector*, who puts his spell upon a pure girl, and while her body is like a corpse, sends her soul whirling away into long-forgotten times, and shows her what hellish things he did three hundred years ago!"

"A fear has crept upon me—I cannot deny it—many a time, while gazing on his face, a fear and a shudder worse than death. And yet, to me, he has never spoken an unkind word—his eye never rests upon me, save with a look of love,—love such as a father might feel for a dear child. When all the world forsook me, when the wound was bleeding on my breast, and the unconscious body of the Orphan Girl was given to the mercy of a cold winter night, then he was my friend, my only friend. And yet—and yet—"

Madeline buried her forehead in her hands, as though some 'Thought too terrible for utterance, had suddenly gloomed upon her soul. Her hair glossy and brown, flowing in copious waves to her shoulders, her white robes floating loosely around her womanly shape, she seemed—contrasted with the Outcast, so haggard and way-worn—like a pure spirit, summoned into life by a wizard's spell, and convulsed with grief as the realities of the world were made known to her once more, after she had enjoyed the untroubled calm of the grave.—The wizard, the enchanter sat near her, glowering fixedly upon her face, with flashing but tearful eyes.—

"That's right," he whispered—"You cannot speak too badly of Gilbert Morgan. The knife with which he stabbed you, lies at your feet, and doubtless the memory of his crime rankles in your heart." He rose and stood before her, tall and haggard, with the light upon his face, while his form was wrapped in shadow. "Good-bye, girl, I'm goin'. And I'll tell Gilbert that you speak of him with loathing, and at the same time keep all your love for the fiend in human shape, or perhaps for *Reginald*.—Wasn't that his name?"

The young woman started to her feet, and stood before him, pale but beautiful, all that was pure, all that was impassioned in her soul, rushing to her eyes.

"Tell him, tell Gilbert," she cried, weighing every word, and looking him full in the face, "That the name of Reginald is to me, but as a sound uttered in the delirium of a fever. Even now, as I speak it, my heart leaps in my bosom, and yet that name brings home to me, no memory save that which speaks of a proud Lord, plotting the dishonor of a poor Orphan child. But the name of Gilbert——"

"Gilbert, yes, his name—" interrupted the Outcast.

"The name of Gilbert speaks to me of Wissahikon—" her voice fell, the tears streamed down her cheeks—"Of Home!"

She sank in the chair, and her tresses floated over the hands which were pressed against her brow; the old man started wildly forward,



reached forth his arms, but as suddenly sank back again into his former position—cold, erect, and to all appearance, immovable.

“Can I say more?” she raised her face, brilliant with tears, toward the light—“Have I not bared my heart to you? To you, whom I have never seen before, whom I do not know,—unless indeed—”

She gazed upon him long and anxiously, while he awaited the result of her scrutiny in evident suspense.

“Unless—well, well, my girl—”

“Unless indeed, you are my Protector,—my Father—in this disguise! O, say, have you not done this to test my affection for you? But it is not kind,—it is not manly—to steal thus upon me at dead of night, and force me to lay bare the secrets of my heart, by telling me that Gilbert lives. Gilbert, alas! who has long since crumbled into dust!”

He shrunk away from her extended arms, and turned his face aside from the light.

At this moment, as she stood with outstretched arms,—her face reflected in the mirror, warming slowly into bloom once more—while he started back and concealed his face from the light, an incident took place, witnessed by neither, and yet—it may be—fraught with the most important results.

A hand appeared among the hangings, which separated this chamber from the next; a letter was thrown into the room; it lighted at the very feet of Madeline, and yet she did not see it. The hand then disappeared, and in its place a red round face peered in through the hangings,—looked hurriedly round with large vacant eyes—and then vanished without a sound.

Was it the face of Jacopo the Philosopher?

“Come, Father, confess it! This is a merry jest of yours to test my affection for you, and at the same time learn the secrets of my heart, in regard to Reginald and Gilbert. You know father, that Reginald was only a passing cloud, while Gilbert’s memory has ever been to me dear as the summer sky, which smiles above my Wissahikon home. Could the grave give up its dead, could Gilbert come back this hour, you know—you must know—how willingly I would share his fate, and endeavor to atone for the past, by loving his own faithful wife among the woods of Wissahikon!”

There was music in her voice—blushes like daybreak upon her cheek—light pure as the midnight stars in her large full eyes.

“But I am not Rolof Sener,” said the Outcast, in a voice thick and broken as his chest heaved, and he turned his face aside—“I am not the miserable Deformed—no, by ——! I am taller than he,—your own eyes might convince you of that!”

“Yes, yes, but is this hair, this beard so venerable your own?” and she burst into a merry laugh. “Come—come—father, confess it! The man

who can so well disguise his face, can certainly add a few inches to his stature. Ah, ha ! Have I found you out ? But it was not kind ; indeed, indeed it was a cruel jest. *Now* you will fulfil your promise—I shall go to Wissahikon, shall I not ?”

Laughing, blushing, her bosom once more beating into full life, she sprang toward him with outstretched arms,—like a beloved daughter who has foiled her father in some merry surprise—she clasped him by the neck, and her hair flowed over his shoulders.

He unwound her arms,—thrust her gently aside—and hurried with unsteady steps from her chamber.

She stood there like a statue of surprise, gazing—not after him—but upon the spot where he had been, with a mingled look of mirth and wonder, her lips smiling while her eyes gathered new light as they shone with tears.

And all the while the letter which had been thrown into the room by an unknown hand, lay unperceived at her feet.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-THIRD.

“GILBERT MORGAN !”

MEANWHILE the Outcast threading the dark passages with hurried steps, soon reached the corridor. Through its gloom he hastened, and descending the stairway presently stood in the darkness of the lower chamber, his hands extended as he searched anxiously for the door, which communicated with Betsy’s cabin. The door was found; the bolt drawn ; and there burst into the presence of the astonished widow, an Apparition that might have frightened many a bolder heart than hers.

She was on her knees in the closet, praying in strong German and with copious tears for the safety of the poor Girl, who, like a Nun in her Cloister, was enshrined in the darkness of the Haunted House. She had procured another candle ; it stood upon her table, and flung a strong light over the luxuriant form, which—kneeling—bloomed securely within the capacious closet. The bust of the widow rose and fell like a big wave ; her warm lips gave utterance to a melancholy litany of sobs, moans and prayers.

“Te oldt fyste !” she cried with a decided accent—“To go into tat house witout leave or license ! And fot is to becom of me ? Fot, I say ? [She did not say *what* on this occasion, but with emphasis, Fot !] Te tefil as pays me for takin’ care of te girl, will carry me off in a puff o’

smoke, an' brimstone—he will—I knows he will. I nefer liked his eyes—nefer, nefer !”

At this moment the bolt was drawn, and the Apparition of the old out-cast, with tall form and haggard face, long hair and beard as white as snow, gloomed upon the widow's eyes. He did not seem to wait for ceremony for leaping over the widow's shoulder, even as she knelt in her sorrow, he plunged through the closet into her room, and began to caper over the floor, his white hair waving like a banner, as he whirled round and round.

“Lordt !” cried Betsy—“Fot next !”

The old man uttered bursts of wild laughter as he performed this lively exercise, exclaiming between every burst—“Don't mind me Betsy. I'm only crazy, that's all. Have n't got as much sense as would make a decent Idiot of myself. You see I had to run from the girl, or I'd a-gone stark mad.”

Presently he brought his dance abruptly to a close ; he flung himself into a chair, and the widow started to her feet, not only astonished but completely overwhelmed in all her modest instincts.

“Untressin' hisself in my room !” she gasped—“Tis is too much ! Fot next !”

It was no dream, but a painful truth. The old man was engaged in divesting himself of his clothing with the rapidity of a tailor's apprentice.

He did not take off his miserable shoes, but simply tore them from his feet. Nor did he cut the strings which bound his leggings, but rent away, and ripped away, until strings and leggings lay on the floor beside the worn-out shoes. Next, his girdle fell ; and then the tattered garment, which reached from his broad shoulders to his knees, was lifted over his head, and dashed at Betsy's feet.

“O !” gasped the widow, taking one interminable breath as her eyes dilated in her blushing face.

Do not imagine for a moment that the aged gentleman had transformed himself into one of those elegant representations of Ancient Statuary,—known in our modern days as Artistes,—qualified with the big word Model—and renowned at once for scantiness of drapery and decency. Do not fancy that he had turned himself into Apollo bending the Bow ; or Ajax defying the lightning ; or even that most renowned of all classic studies, the African alarmed at the sound of thunder.

No ! He had thrown aside his shoes and leggings, but in their place appeared a pair of stalwart limbs, encased in boots of black leather, and hose of red velvet ; the ragged garment he had flung at Betsy's feet, but where it had dangled its rags, the widow now beheld a coat of rich velvet, green embroidered with gold, clothing a broad and muscular chest, and gathered to a manly waist, by a glittering girdle, adorned with a dagger with golden hilt, and a pair of pistols mounted in silver.



The long flowing beard, the waving hair white as snow, alone prevented the widow from deciding that this sudden transformation had converted a miserable outcast into as handsome a cavalier, as ever eyes of woman looked upon.

"Ah!" ejaculated the widow, drawing another breath in a paroxysm of delight and wonder—"Tat is nice!"

The outcast started to his feet, displaying a magnificent form, almost of giant stature, clad in a dress which showed to advantage its manly proportions, and at the same time gave it something of a military air. His hair and beard so white and long, presented a singular contrast to his youthful form and elegant attire.

"Betsy, how do I look now?" he said, lifting at once his old felt hat, his hair and beard from his head, as you would raise your hat in the course of a polite bow. "Do you know me, girl?"

There was no sign of withered age upon the face, which now caught the rays of the light. A hardy, sunburnt face, with a thick brown beard about the firm chin and muscular throat; a face boldly featured, lighted by clear blue eyes, and with short and copious curls of chesnut hair, clustering around a frank open forehead, which was darkened only by one deep wrinkle and a single scar.

"Gott pless us!" cried the widow, with her eyes raining tears—"Its the teadt come back to life—it's Gilbert Morgan, or his ghost!"

"Yes, Gilbert Morgan is no longer afraid of his own name, no longer in the power of the Fiend!" As he spoke he rose to his full stature, and his form was knit in every muscle, his eyes—sunken beneath the compressed brows—lighted by all the resolution of his iron will.

"From this hour I defy him, and cast off his chains. If he comes to me in human shape, why a pistol or a knife will do his work forever. But if he is, indeed, a devil in a half-human body, why, Madeline shall pray to God for me. Her soul is pure—her prayer will be heard."

"What you mean, Gilbert?" faltered Betsy.

He turned to her, and the cloud passed from his face; his eyes fairly danced with joy.

"Come, Betsy, we will go to Madeline! She will know me now, and d'ye hear, Betsy? There 'll be a cottage soon, under the shadow of a big rock, by the Wissahikon shore, a cottage for Gilbert and his wife. And you shall come and live with us, Betsy—no more spasms, ha, ha! Forgive me, Betsy, for I've led a wild life, but now it is over. Come—softly—let us steal gently up the stairs, and ask her where the old man has gone!"

While he spoke, his eye dancing, his chest heaving in broad and deep respirations, every tone of his voice tremulous with an intense—almost maniac—joy, he led the way through the closet into the lower room of the Haunted House. Betsy followed him with hands upraised, and

eyes dilating, while her mouth assumed once more the shape of a capital O !

"D'ye see that Harp carved on the middle stone of the fire place ? There's money under that stone, Betsy, money buried there years ago by a rich merchant, who made his millions in the slave trade, and died of the fear of poverty. Come—never mind it now ; we'll see Madeline first, and talk of the money afterwards."

Up the stairs and through the corridor, holding the light above his head, while Betsy follows at his heels, rubbing her eyes in order to assure herself that it is no dream. They reach the entrance of the place of prayer where the white altar stands alone in the gloom, and the Image of the Crucified smiles over the Holy Book.

"Wait here, Betsy ; I will go alone. Take the light and wait ; in a moment I will call you. O ! if you only knew how my heart went leap-in' to my throat, as she put her arms about my neck, and yet, I was afraid to tell her my name."

With these words he left the good widow standing at the end of the corridor, and passing through the silent Oratory, soon stood on the threshold of Madeline's chamber.

"Madeline !" he called—in the familiar voice of the olden time—but there was no answer. His hand upon the curtains, which protected the entrance of her chamber, his form veiled in their shadows, he called again : "Madeline ! Madeline ! It is I—Gilbert—come back to life again !"

He listened, while the blood swept like molten fire in every vein ; he listened, but there was no reply.

He parted the curtains and entered her chamber, reaching forth his arms to clasp her to his heart.

The light still glimmered in the mirror, shedding a dim ray over the luxurious furniture and white-curtained bed, but—Madeline was not there.

Gilbert paused in the centre of the room, looking from side to side, with a vague and bewildered stare.

"She is gone !" he cried, with an accent of inexpressible despair. "The Fiend has foiled me once again ! But no—she is concealed somewhere in this accursed mansion, I will search it from the garret to the cellar. I will——"

He parted the curtains of the bed ; it bore the impress of Madeline's form, but she was gone.

"I will defy the fiend, and walk abroad once more among livin' men like a livin' man. Ah ! What's this ?"

A white object glared from the sombre carpet at his feet. It was a letter, the seal had the appearance of having been but lately broken ; it bore no superscription, but a single word at once rivetted Gilbert's attention.

“‘To Madeline!’” he muttered as he held it to the light, and then sinking in a chair, he read the following lines :

“TO MADELINE !

“Do not tremble, fair girl, when you behold the name, written beneath these lines! It is I—it is Reginald,—who sought your love, under a cowardly disguise, and sought to lure you to dishonor, on the fatal New Year’s morning of 1775. And Reginald, repenting of the crime, now seeks to make atonement, and thus deserves your forgiveness.

Forgive me Madeline. The dream of passion, has passed away. I no longer look upon you with the gaze of an unholy love. You are to me, as something set apart from the crimes and woes of this mortal life—you are, to me, as pure, as distant, as unapproachable, as the evening star, which trembles serenely on the sunset horizon—as a Saint enthroned in Heaven, to whom we may present our prayers, but whose sanctity repels the idea of earthly passion.

“I seek to atone for the past. Will you listen, Madeline,—can you forgive? Come to Wissahikon, Madeline; my servant who bears this note, will lead you to the appointed place, where your hand will be joined with the hand of your plighted Husband, Gilbert Morgan. This is the atonement which I would make; Gilbert is my friend; and believe me your,—

Lover no longer—but Brother,

REGINALD LYNDULFE.”

Gilbert read this letter, examined the seal, bearing a coat of arms, with the cipher, “R. L.” and then exclaimed in a tone, whose emphasis of despair, no words, can depict :

“And she has been cheated by this lie—she has gone to meet this Reginald Lyndulfe. The thrice-perjured knave! My name must serve as a cloak for his schemes,—in my name, he will complete Madeline’s dishonor.”

He rose from his seat, and stood for a moment buried in thought, his frank, manly face, darkening slowly, with the impress of a desperate resolve.

“‘His servant’—hah! I thought I recognized the knave, when I sat under the oak, this afternoon. But it is not yet too late to foil this wretch. I will to Wissahikon, I will meet him there, and as for the Fiend, why a true heart and a good purpose is worth the malice of a thousand devils at any time!”

As he spoke, his almost giant form, presented an impressive image of muscular power, linked with a rugged but manly beauty, His sunburnt cheek, flushed with new life; his eyes shone with new fire; a defiant resolve, hung on his lip; and with his neck thrown proudly back upon his broad shoulders, his right hand laid upon the dagger’s hilt, his wide



chest swelling in the light—he looked in every respect, the brave man, yes the Hero.

“Now for the Wissahikon!” he said and was turning away from the light, when—His eyes grew fixed and glassy. His limbs rigid and motionless.\* He stood as if suddenly transformed to stone, his features, livid and immoveable as Death.

This change took place within the compass of a second. One instant he was turning away with a flushed cheek and defiant lip; the next, he was stone—his limbs stiffened—his fixed eyeballs, glaring in the mirror with a cold glassy lustre. There was something awful, beyond the power of words, in this inexplicable transformation.

His lips moved languidly, but every muscle of his face was stiff, frozen—“I hear your voice—” he slowly uttered—“And I will obey.”

Was it Gilbert Morgan, the brave man, conscious of his fearless heart and iron arm, who spoke? Or, was it Gilbert Morgan, the victim of a remorseless soul, which had deprived him of all power over his own will,—destroyed in fact, for the moment, his individuality—and filled his brain with the Soul of Another?

Like a man walking in his sleep, Gilbert strode slowly from the room, as he fixed his glassy eyes upon the darkness, and murmured languidly,—

“Master, I come! I come!

Thus he reached the corridor, where Betsy awaited, light in hand. She spoke to him—he passed her without a word—his eyes fixed, his hands outstretched, his gait measured and artificial.

He reached the stairway, and began to descend. Betsy filled with wonder, darted forward light in hand, and saw his face, as she called him by name. She saw his face, and fell fainting at the head of the stairs.

It was not a living man,—the thought flashed on her, as she saw his face—who walked thus in silence, with fixed eyeballs, and stride measured and artificial. It was a Corpse, placed on its feet by some infernal wizardcraft, and sent abroad, to chill the hearts of the living, with its sad terrible gaze.

Our history now returns to the farm-house of Peter Dorfner, and to the room where Madeline on the last night of 1775, sank beneath the dagger of Gilbert Morgan.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THIRD.

"ROLOF SENER."

THE sunbeam stealing through the small panes of the narrow window, tinted with its warm glow, the dusky stain, which dyed the floor, and shone upon the massive forehead of the Unknown, as seated beside the table, his gaze rested upon the papers and manuscripts which were scattered there.

From the moment when Jacopo left the room, in obedience to his commands, he had remained in the same position, his head drooped, his eye fixed upon those manuscripts, his pale and delicate hand resting upon the table. Sometimes a smile wreathed his thin lips—again his eyes, sunk deeper beneath the down-drawn brow, and shone with a sad, gloomy lustre—and then his face was calm and cold again, immoveable and statue-like as his form.

One finger rested upon a golden coin, which bore an ancient date, and an inscription in bold characters, somewhat worn by time. Whenever his eye wandered to this coin, his gaze grew glassy; his lips were compressed; his forehead was darkened by a single vein, which rising from the brows, swelled beneath the pale skin, in distinct and—almost hideous—prominence.

Then his face was imbued by an expression, which gave a kindly smile to his lips, a clear and tranquil light to his eyes. It was a look of indescribable calm, indicating a heart full of peace, a soul at rest with God and man.

He bent down again to the papers which covered the table, examined them one by one, muttering all the while to himself, while his face changed from light to shadow, from that look of indescribable calm, to one steeped in dark and repulsive emotion.

Thus an hour passed away.

When the hour was gone, and the sunbeam wandered from the pale brow of the Unknown, to the papers on the table, there was a footstep on the stairway which led to Madeline's chamber. It was the footstep of a strong man, completely unnerved by some powerful emotion; it echoed through the passage at the head of the stairs, and Reginald Lyndulfe stood upon the threshold of that fatal room.

Clad as you doubtless remember, in that blue hunting shirt, which concealed his scarlet uniform, with knife and powder horn at his side, and rifle on his shoulder, he paused upon the threshold, while his chesnut hair, floating carelessly from beneath his cap, could not relieve the death-like pallor of his face.

He started as his gaze rested upon the Unknown, and resting one arm against the door-post, muttered in a half-audible tone—"A stranger here! What can this mean? The negro told me that the house was deserted, and as for old Peter I passed him, as he was sleeping in the arbor."

The Unknown raised his eyes, and calmly surveyed the manly form, which—framed in the doorway—stood hesitating on the threshold.

"Ah! Is it you, Reginald!" he said with a smile—"Come in my Lord. Take a seat on—is there no chair? Well then take a seat on the bed; it is covered with dust, but you wont mind that."

"You know my name?" ejaculated Reginald, with a look of immeasurable surprise, and then relapsing into a look and attitude of aristocratic *hauteur*, he exclaimed—"You have the advantage of me, sir. I do not know you."

"And yet I stood beside your father, when he placed this Medal about your Mother's neck, the day before she embarked for England. It was in the island of Jamaica—at your father's plantation—twenty-one years ago."

These words pronounced in that calm, even voice, with an expressive movement of the small white hand, had the effect of magic. The face of Reginald became frightfully pale, he staggered into the room, and placed his hands upon the table, while his eyes were rivetted to the face of the unknown.

"You—stood—by—my—father—" he gasped, speaking with a choking sensation in his throat—"You!"

"Here is the medal," said the unknown, carelessly extending his hand—"You can examine it at your leisure. I saw your father place it about your mother's neck twenty-one years ago."

But Reginald did not grasp the medal; he saw the cross and the inscription which it bore, and shrank away from it, as though its touch was Death.

"Your name—" faltered Reginald.

"Rolof Sener, my child. The Swedish traveller, of whom you've doubtless heard your father speak?"

"Rolof Sener!" echoed Reginald, and he sunk back on the bed—whose coverlet yet bore the print of Madeline's form—pressing his hand nervously to his forehead, for his brain was throbbing with intense torture: "Rolof Sener! Yes; my father has spoken of you—oftentime. But you do not look like a very aged man, and Rolof Sener, eighteen years ago, was at least fifty years old."

He raised his eyes, and for the first time, discovered that the figure of Rolof Sener was characterized by a deformity, which seemed to have been subdued by a careful mode of dress. His shoulders were broad and high; his spine marked by an unsightly curvature; indeed, looking at him, from the side, instead of face to face, the head of Rolof seemed to rest against



rather than upon his shoulders. You would not perchance call him a hunchback, and yet his deformity—not so much observable at a front view, and with his head bent over the table, in the act of writing—was now painfully apparent.

“Yes, I was with your father on that occasion, twenty-one years ago,” said Rolof Sener, turning his chair so that he sat face to face with Reginald—“And with him at his Jamaica plantation on another occasion. Toward the close of the year 1757, when your father received the first intelligence of that two-fold calamity, which converted him,—Clarence Albert—the younger, nay the youngest son, into a Peer of the Realm, yes, Duke of Lyndulfe, with a rent roll of one hundred thousand pounds, per year. I remember it well!”

“*Two-fold calamity*,” muttered Reginald, passing his hand over his forehead—“I have heard of it; but not from my father’s lips. An aged peasant at Lyndulfe told me not more than a year since, that my grand-father, John, Duke of Lyndulfe, and his eldest son, Ranulph John, died about the same time, by a strange accident.”

“A very strange accident—” and the face of Rolof Sener was darkened by that solitary vein—“Remarkably strange!” There was a mocking smile upon his lips.

“What mean you? My grand-father was thrown from his horse, and my uncle—his eldest son—was killed, by the horse, in the attempt to save his father’s life.”

‘The color came to Reginald’s face once more; his deep blue eye flashed with anger.

“And the old Duke was found dead, beside his dead steed,” continued Rolof in an absent tone—“As for Ranulph John, his body was found in a ditch, so hideously mangled, the face trodden as though by horse’s hoofs, that his best friends, could only know him by some fragment of his dress. It was a strange accident, and by that *accident* your father, the youngest of three sons, became Duke of Lyndulfe.”

Again that cold and mocking smile, played around the thin lips of Rolof Sener.

“Three sons?” echoed Reginald with a start—“There were but two—my father and his Elder Brother.”

“Three, my child, three. A son younger than Ranulph John, but older than your father, who had been born on the German possessions of your House, and enjoyed those possessions in his mother’s right. His name was Gaspard Michael; he bore the title of Count, and was something of a German as much by feeling and education, as by his birth. Three sons, my”—

“Hold,—” Reginald once more pressed his hand to his forehead—“This is not so. At least,” he hesitated—“I never heard of it before.”

“You are young, handsome, fond of the sex, and with no disinclination

for a duel, now and then; the very type of a gallant cavalier, and *therefore* it is to be presumed, that you have heard of everything. Is it not my Lord?"

The mocking scorn which had lingered about Rolof's lips, now mounted to his eyes. There is nothing in the world, so cutting in its calm contempt, as the sneer of an old man, who turns all the fire of Youth, into ice with his glance, and withers its warmest hope, with one cold look.

"You are disposed to jest with me," said Reginald, while the blood rushed to his face. "Still, I must repeat, that I never heard of this Gaspard Michael. He died young?"

"He *disappeared*, soon after the double-calamity," replied Rolof calmly "There were proofs of his death, or else your father would not have succeeded to the title and estates of Lyndulfe."

"Of course he left no heir," said Reginald carelessly.

"Suppose he *did* leave an heir," replied Rolof Sener, in that peculiar tone which penetrated the listener's heart, "Or, to carry out, the hypothesis; suppose that heir is in existence at this moment? What then?"

Reginald's face was shadowed by a cloud.

"It is impossible," he said—"You are dreaming."

"What then?" repeated the singular personage, with a latent laughter in his eye.

"You mock me,"—and Reginald's eye shone with anger, while he could not turn his gaze aside from the pale face of Rolof; "In the first place, Gaspard Michael, never lived. True, I have your word,—or your jest—as proofs of his existence. In the second place, even if his existence were no fable, by your own admission, he died and left no heir. There is no need, ha, ha, no need of your 'what then?' my good sir."

It was pleasant to see Reginald laugh; his teeth were so white; his blue eyes so full of Youth and Hope. And then he was Twenty-Two!

Twenty-Two, delicious age, when some fragrance from Paradise, still clings to the flowers of Earth; when every pulse beats Pleasure; and the expanding eye looks through the Future, and beholds only the blossoms and sunshine of that glorious landscape, without one thought of the Skeleton whom those blossoms conceal, or one glance for the Grave, which the sunshine only invents with rosy light.

"Twenty-Two!" Even I who write these words,—and certainly I am very far from being an old man yet; at least not in the almanac sense of the phrase—even I look back over the pathway of four years, and wonder in what dim grave, I buried the Boy of Twenty-Two.

"Twenty-Two!" It is the time of Illusions; sweep them away as you grow older; but what is there in Life to repay you for those glorious Illusions? It is the day of Romance—it is soon passed—you awake to the naked Realities of life; those grim skeletons, which the blossoms of

Twenty-Two strewed for awhile, with bloom and fragrance.—Said a Philosopher once, who after a life of intense brain-labor, had brought himself into communion with the Other World, and forced its Spirits to grant his desires, ‘let me be Twenty-Two forever, with its Illusions, its Dreams, its Loves, and its Hates, and I ask no more.’

It was pleasant, I say, to see Reginald laugh, for he was Twenty-Two.

“What then?” echoed the singular personage, known by the name of Rolof Sener—“Why Reginald, the Duke of Lyndulfe—that is to be—will become that most pitiful of all paupers; the heir to the noble blood, and gilded poverty of a Younger Son. A kind of genteel beggar, who is tolerated by the great on account of his lineage; a sort of ‘poor relation’ a gentleman Lazarus, in fact, who haunts the Royal Court, until his sores are dressed with a pension, and his rags made decent, with a little golden tinsel. Is’t not laughable? Reginald Duke of Lyndulfe, Baron of Marionhurst, of Dernberg, of Camelford, with a string of other titles that I do not now remember, and a rent-roll of one hundred thousand a year, suddenly transformed into plain *Captain* Reginald, a gentleman of elegant figure, and—five hundred a year!”

“This is insulting,” cried Reginald, glowing with indignation—“Your age alone protects you!”

“And if I were younger, you would dissect my lungs with a sword, or search for my brains with a pistol bullet, and thus vindicate your honor! Bah! I am ashamed of you. Read that!”

He took a letter from the table, and handed it to Reginald.

“What is this, I see! From my father, and dated yesterday; written, too, from our Camp in Jersey! It is indeed his own handwriting; without a doubt his signature. What does it mean?”

“Read!” said Rolof.

Reginald read the letter aloud:

“‘Rolof:—

“‘The plan is good; the project itself confers immortal honor on its originator. The Army of His Majesty is now in Jersey, as you are aware, advancing toward the Delaware; the object of the General being the possession of Philadelphia. But the project will pay us for a thousand Philadelphias; will end the war, in fact, and bring the revolted colonies to the foot of the throne. I will be in \* \* \* \* \* at the appointed time, and at the place you designate. Let your messenger meet me there, with a line from you, in your own hand, which I will take as a token to go forward. You will have time to perfect your understanding with our friends in Philadelphia; we can seize HIM away from HIS camp; conceal HIM for a few days in Philadelphia, and—the war is at an end—’”



"What mean these stars?" asked Reginald, his face the very embodiment of surprise.

"There are ten," answered Rolof, "and there are just ten letters in the word *Germantown*."

"And my father is coming——but who is this person designated as '*him*'?"

"Washington, the rebel leader. He will be here,—at Wissahikon—to-night. Some days since, he received a letter from Philadelphia, signed by Jefferson, and other prominent members of the rebel Congress. That letter designated the Wissahikon as the scene for an important interview, between Washington and these rebel statesmen; to take place on the *last night* of the *second week* in June."

"To-night!"

"Yes, to-night he will be here, and the rebel leaders from Philadelphia will offer him the crown."

"And my father?" cried Reginald, trembling with agitation.

"He will be here to-night. With a band of trusty Philadelphians, rich men, my child, friends of the King, he will surround the house in which the Rebel General and the Rebel Statesmen are in conclave, and take prisoner, the heart and arm of America, George Washington."

"It is a magnificent idea!" cried Reginald, in a broken voice, but with flashing eyes—"And my father, the Duke, will have the honor of this capture. But what has this to do with Gaspard Michael?"

"You have not yet finished the letter. Read on—" said Rolof Sener.

"The papers which you have furnished me, in regard to the existence of the Son of Gaspard Michael, are indeed appalling. Search further Rolof; assure yourself that this person, of whom you speak, is indeed the Son of Gaspard Michael. The house of Lyndulfe must not be shaken by the hand of a Pretender to its wealth and honors. You inform me that *he was living* six months ago; I beseech you, my good friend, to spare no exertions in this matter. Does he live now? What is his condition—where his place of abode? I assure you, that my first reason for embarking in your project, was a wish to rivet myself in the favor of the King, and thus secure his interest against the claims of this—or any other—Pretender.

LYNDULFE."

Reginald crushed the letter in his fingers, exclaiming with an oath—"This is indeed a terrible revelation!" Then he buried his face in his hands, and sat gazing on the floor, with a blank and colorless visage.

Rolof Sener regarded him with a searching look, but with a smile.

"This Gaspard Michael—this Son—where is he?" shouted Reginald,

as convulsed in every nerve, he started to his feet. "Speak, or by the \* \* \* above us, I'll throttle you!"

"He lives on the Wissahikon," said Rolof Sener, in a calm tone, his face serene and smiling. "Within a mile from where you stand, and—you wont throttle me."

"On the Wissahikon!" and Reginald sank back upon the bed. It was indeed a crushing blow; the mere Chance of this Pretender's existence was terrible, but the Certainty was madness. Reginald seated on the bed—printed with the outlines of Madeline's form—felt the Dukedom gliding from under his feet, even as a hunter, gazing over the brow of a precipice, feels the solid rock quiver and tremble ere it falls.

"This room is accursed—the very air breathes ruin to me and to my race!" he muttered, in a wild tone, and gazed with sidelong glance at the dusky stain near the foot of the bed, where the sunbeam gayly shone.

"What mean you?" asked Rolof, with a look and accent of wonder.

"You know, you must know it,—” cried Reginald, starting up and pacing the floor—"For you seem to know everything that is evil. Here, here, twenty-one years ago, on a dark and stormy night, my Mother was murdered—murdered, even as she struggled in the anguish of a mother's pains. They tore her babe from her still quivering form—"

His look ghastly, his accent ringing with an emphasis of unutterable horror, he confronted Rolof Sener, with clenched hands and swelling chest.

"How know you this?" said the elderly man, very calmly—"Is that stain near your feet, your mother's blood?"

Reginald started back, with a shudder in every nerve.

"Or does that dingy blood-mark bring to mind, the anguish of a poor and friendless Orphan Girl, who, struggling in her seducer's arms—in this room, two years and six months ago—besought his mercy, in the name of her murdered mother, and besought in vain!"

These words fell upon Reginald like so many mortal thrusts from the blade of a keen and polished dagger.

"Hold!" he cried,—“Another word, and I will ——” he laid his trembling hand upon the hilt of his hunting-knife, as his face grew purple with settled rage.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIFTH.

## “MY SISTER!”

“HER prayers, her tears, even the memory of her murdered mother—all were in vain! Nothing could deter you, from that cowardly outrage. You had palsied her mind, fevered her blood with a poisonous drug. And to this bed, Sir—or rather—*my Lord*—where poor and friendless, but innocent, she was sleeping—to this bed, with your hellish purpose gleaming in your blood-shot eye, you crept, at the dead of night, and——ha, ha! Fell back, frightened and cold, when you saw this Medal glimmering on her bosom.”

“I knew it not,” said Reginald, in a choking voice,—“I knew not that she was my —— Fiend! You will drive me mad!”

“You knew it not,” whispered Rolof, bending forward, while a withering sneer crept over his pale face. “That cannot excuse your purpose, nor in the slightest degree palliate your crime. For the woman, who is at once poor, friendless, and innocent, is the Sister of every Man, who has one throb of honor in his breast. His Sister, not indeed by ties of blood, but by a loftier and more touching relationship; by that Poverty, which, while it makes her Virtue shine only the brighter, as the diamond gleams more beautiful when in the dust, invokes protection from honest Manhood, in a voice that a devil alone could disobey.”

His large eyes dilated and gleamed with a calm deep light, while his voice, rising as he went on, rang upon the ears of the guilty man, like the tones of an accusing angel.

“Do not shelter yourself behind that petty plea, my Lord! The man who wrongs a poor Poor maiden, and uses his wealth as an excuse for his fraud, in plain words, wrongs his own Sister.”

Reginald fell back from the tone, the deep steady gaze of Rolof Sener, and stood like a convicted culprit before his Judge, his hands hanging by his side, his head sunken on his breast.

He did not raise his eyes until many moments were passed.

“Come, my Lord,” said Rolof, in a changed voice, “How do you know that your mother was murdered in this room?”

“From the day when my father saw her embark for England, not a word was ever heard of my mother, nor of the ship in which she sailed, until three years ago. Then, in a letter, without a signature, my father was informed, that the ship had been taken by a Pirate vessel, and that my mother, Alice of Lyndulfe, had been brought to Philadelphia, by one of the pirates, soon after the capture of the ship.”



"With what object, pray?" asked Rolof.

"The anonymous letter gave me no motive," said Reginald—"It merely stated that she was brought to Philadelphia, in secrecy, and concealed in the house of a good citizen, who was a confederate of the pirate crew."

"One of those good merchants who go to church on Sunday, and fit out a slave-ship on Monday morning?" suggested Rolof—"When the cargo of slaves die off, or prove unprofitable, what so easy,—so mercantile—as to transform the Slaver into the Pirate. Go on, my child."

"It was this information, that induced my father to send me to Philadelphia, three years ago. While here, in fact on the morning of January First, '75, a London paper was handed to me, which contained "the last speech and confession of one Greiley a Pirate" who had been executed at Tyburn in the fall of '74. This "speech" stated distinctly that on the 23d of November, 1756, a woman was murdered, on the Wissahikon, near Philadelphia, by a man named Torfen or Dorfner, the confederate of a band of pirates, robbers, or—slave-dealers."

"You put the slave-dealer, who is a very respectable person and a Christian withal, in very dubious company," said Rolof Sener, with a smile—"Well, the motive of the deed?"

"The husband of the woman was supposed to have a large amount of plate and coin—all gold—concealed on some Island, in the West Indies," resumed Reginald. "This confederate Torfen or Dorfner, attempted to wring from her lips, the secret of this place of concealment. She was seized with the pains of child-birth, while the ruffian's hand was at her throat. She died *'and her body was concealed in a closet, near a window which looks out upon a chesnut tree'* so the Confession ran, *'and the child was taken away.'*"

"And you came here to-day, in order to search that closet?" asked Rolof.

"That was my purpose. The merchant Hopkins, to whom my Father entrusted the matter, has never written, since the hour when I left Philadelphia, more than two years ago. Therefore I conjecture that all traces of the deed have long since been removed, or that Hopkins has been unable to obtain access to this room, on account of Dorfner's repulsive and ferocious character."

"Why not invoke the aid of the law?"

"Do you not perceive that this would foil all my father's plans? He is by no means certain that the murdered woman and my mother, are the same. Then the confession of the dying pirate, strong enough to warrant a suspicion, is still by no means sufficient, to ensure a successful prosecution."

"And yet there is the medal, found by yourself, on the breast of Madeline, an Orphan Girl, whose parentage no one could trace. The very coin, which your father placed around the neck of his wife, twenty-one

years ago, while I sat by his side, and you—a very babe—laughed in his eyes.”

“Could I speak to my father of this medal? Could I tell him that—” Reginald paused; the blood rushed to his face, and after a moment he continued, in a hollow whisper—“Beside, what need was there to prosecute the inquiry? Madeline was dead—I dare not tell my father so—but she was dead, before I left Philadelphia, on that fatal morning.”

“There is the closet,” said Rolof again turning his chair, and bending over the table, “You had better search it. If there’s any truth in the confession of the pirate, you may discover some traces of the murdered woman.”

Reginald gazed for a moment upon the singular being, who sat with downcast head, and eyes fixed upon the manuscripts which covered the table, and then slowly advancing toward the closet, ‘*near the window which looked out upon the chesnut tree,*’ he laid his hand upon its single panel reaching from the ceiling to the floor.

The western window was shaded, as we have said before, by a cloak or some other garment, which only permitted a few wandering gleams of light, to tremble over the floor.

His hand upon the panel, Reginald felt an unknown terror steal through his veins; he dared not open the closet door.

“It is dark and gloomy in this corner of the room,” he muttered, and tore the dust-covered garment from the window. A flood of light, rushed through the narrow panes, and revealed the face of Reginald, distorted by a new emotion, surprise mingled with Remorse.

It was the dress of Madeline, which lay at his feet. Yes dingy and moth-eaten, as it was, that garment had enveloped her young limbs, on the fatal night, when she clasped Gilbert Morgan by the hands, and kindled into blushes at his kiss. It was her wedding dress.

Reginald was a man of the world; that is, he had whiled away, a year or more at a sound Orthodox College, made some advances toward Latin and Greek, whirled through Europe in search of the picturesque, learned all the manners of a gentleman, from drinking his third bottle of Champagne, without staggering, to killing his man in a duel without a tremor, or crushing the honor of some unprotected woman, without a blush—he was a man of the world. He was an officer in the service of his Majesty; he was heir to a Dukedom; he was a finished specimen of British Chivalry, in its transition state it may be, yet still British Chivalry.

But now he trembled and shook, and grew pale like any common man.

One of the rude ‘blackguard people’ could not have manifested more ungentlemanly feeling. Tears started to his eyes, tears such as every-day people weep, only somewhat more bitter and scalding. Could Jacopo have seen him, at this moment, he would have been ashamed of his pupil

for Reginald was no longer a man of the world, nor a gentleman, but simply—a man.

All the manhood, that the world had left in his breast, was now roused into spasmodic life.

The wedding dress of the murdered girl, lay at his feet—his hand was on the panel of the closet, which was supposed to conceal the skeleton of her murdered mother.

And the girl, who had been murdered in that room two years before, and the woman who twenty-one years gone by, had died by violent hands, in the anguish of a mother's pains, also in that room, were joined in the holiest relationship, Mother and Daughter. And the blood which coursed in Reginald's veins, was also their blood; two words started to his lips, as he thought of them, words that crushed him into abject misery, with their meaning—Mother! Sister!

Unable to speak, he bent down, and raised the dress of Madeline, and laid it gently on the bed. Then gazing from the window, he saw the glad sunshine, resting upon the garden and its flowers—sleeping upon the broad field, strown with heaps of new-mown hay—and gilding with living light the tops of the distant forest trees. All was calm and peaceful there, yes all *without* breathed of day and sunshine, but *within* was darkness, the night of Remorse, with the memory of Madeline written upon its very gloom.

“Shall I pursue this search?” he said aloud, in a changed voice, and with the desire of crushing his emotions—“Dorfner may come; and I do not wish to meet him, at least, until I am certain of his guilt—”

Rolof Sener seated at the table did not reply; his head bent upon his breast, he appeared lost in his studies.

Gazing through the window, Reginald saw the garden with the arbor rising in its centre, and there, enshrined among the vines of the arbor, appeared the round face of Peter Dorfner, its cheeks and beard and eyes, bathed at once, in sunshine and in—sleep.

“Peter will not disturb you,” said Rolof without turning his head. “I found him, not many moments since, in a position of some danger,—sleeping with the knife of his blind Negro, poised over his head. I turned the blow aside, and entered the house,—Peter will sleep until *his time comes*.”

The last words were accompanied by a burst of half-suppressed laughter.

The door of the closet was unlocked; Reginald drew it open, and gazed within.

“There is nothing here,” he cried with an accent of profound disappointment—“The closet is sunken in the thickness of the wall. It is empty. There is no sign nor mark of any secret recess.”



"Sound the wall with the hilt of your hunting knife," the voice of Rolof Sener was heard.

"It returns only a dull, leaden sound," exclaimed Reginald sounding the wall to the right and left. "This cannot be the place of concealment mentioned in the Pirate's confession. Hold! What is this!"

The back wall of the closet, resembling in its dark hue and time-worn appearance, the walls on the right and left, echoed the blow of the knife, with a sharp, hollow sound. Reginald struck again, and again with the hilt of a knife, and suddenly it receded from him, and separated from the body of the closet, like a door swinging on its hinges.

The scene which Reginald beheld, deprived him for a moment of all power of speech or motion. His face was bathed in a red and murky light, which struggled through the aperture, and—contending with the light of day—made his features assume a livid and spectral hue.

He stood upon the threshold of a small room, whose doors and windows, did not seem to have been unclosed for at least twenty years. It was the room which intervened between the stairway and the chamber of Madeline. Over a large table of smoke-darkened wood, a flickering tallow candle, inserted in a rusty candlestick, shed its red and murky light, while the rest of the apartment was enveloped in gloom. In one corner the outlines of a bed, were dimly discernible, and near the feet of Reginald, appeared a dark space in the floor. A plank had been torn away; the dark space was the aperture, between the floor and the ceiling of the lower room.

"Pah! It smells like a vault! Ah, I remember; it was in this room I was to have slept two years ago. Can you tell me Sir, what it means?" he continued, turning his head toward Rolof Sener, who was still seated at the table in the Chamber of Madeline—"This light burning here, in broad day?"

"The light itself may satisfy your curiosity. Look on the table, beneath its rays."

Reginald advanced to the table, carefully avoiding the cavity in the floor. He discovered that a portion of the table was covered by a dingy cloth, which bore some resemblance to the fragment of an old sail.

"There is nothing here," he cried—"Nothing but a smoky candle and piece of old sail. The room itself looks as though it might have been the private study of a Sexton or Undertaker."

"Lift the cloth, my Lord—" said a soft, low voice, and Rolof Sener laid his hand upon the shoulder of the young man. Reginald felt an indescribable sensation pervade him at the touch of that hand; he gazed sidelong upon the pale face, and bold forehead of Rolof Sener—lighted by the red rays of the candle—and a thought came over his mind that he had seen that face before. Where?

"You seem to hesitate," said Rolof—"are you afraid to lift that bit of sackcloth?"

Reginald replied with a laugh, and placing his knife in the girdle of his hunting shirt, raised the sackcloth from the table. The smile which hung about his manly lips, the flush upon his cheek, the careless light in his deep blue eyes—all passed away, and he fell back silent and wondering.

The skeleton of a human being was stretched upon the table; and the light tinged with red lustre every bone, and glared as if in mockery, into the hollow orbits of the skull.

"Your mother!" whispered Rolof Sener. He took the hand of Reginald within his own, and pointed to the cavity in the floor. "Behold her grave!"

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIXTH.

### A LETTER FROM THE DEAD MOTHER.

REGINALD of Lyndulfe was kneeling there beside the remains of his murdered Mother.

His face was buried in his hands, and the red light which mocked the crumbling skeleton, shone over the luxuriant chesnut curls of the young Lord. Not a sound disturbed the stillness; the door which led into Madeline's room was closed, and the candle fast burning to its socket, flung its uncertain and flickering light into the shadows of the narrow apartment.

Near Reginald stood Rolof Sener. Picture to yourself that form clad in black, broad in the chest and shoulders, and rendered harsh in outline, by the deformity of the spine, while the long pallid face seems to rest not so much upon the neck as upon the chest. His large head stood out from the gloom, and as the light flickered and fell, his features seemed to pass through every change of expression, now scowling in sullen scorn, now beaming with smiles and joy.

With his finger on his lip, he stood near the kneeling man, looking like a stern spirit, sent from the Other World to judge between the Living and the Dead.

While the light shines upon those blackened bones—which were once a beautiful and living form—upon that skull—once it enthroned a Mother's

soul—let us leave Reginald to the first strong outbreak of his agony. \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

At last he rose and confronted Rolof Sener with a pallid face, and lustreless eye. Every feature was steeped in dull apathy; this scene had palsied him in every nerve.

“When did you make this discovery?” he said, in an almost inaudible tone.

“An hour ago,” replied Rolof, “urged by *motives which will be made known in due time*, I came toward this house, and found old Dorfner sleeping in the arbor with the Negro’s knife above his head. That blind negro was the slave of your mother; at least he fought for her in her dying hour.”

“Let me go to him at once,” said Reginald, starting to the door—“He may tell us something of my mother’s fate—”

“Not so fast. Listen before you act, my Lord. For my own reasons—which will also be made known in due time,—I turned the negro’s hand aside, and left the old man to his slumbers. Entering the house, I lighted this candle, and sought the room where you discovered me. I obtained entrance to the closet by a false key, and did not hesitate in my researches until I had discovered the secret door at the back of the closet. Then, I stood confounded. The pirate’s words were false. This was my only thought. Urged onward, however, by an impulse, which I cannot account for—*save as an instinctive interest in the affairs of your house*—I searched this room, sounded the walls, and every board of the floor. The result of my search is before you.”

He spoke in a calm and even voice, his gaze full of sympathy, every lineament of his countenance steeped in sorrow.

“But there were papers with the corse? Some word to tell of my mother’s last hour? Some record of the manner of her fate?”

Reginald seized his hand, and trembled in suspense, as he awaited the answer.

“With the skeleton, I discovered certain papers—” said Rolof.

“Where are they? Let me behold them!”

“I was engaged in the examination of these papers when you first appeared—” Rolof began. “They are in the next room!”

“Ah, this indeed is the work of Heaven! The record of my mother’s wrongs—the manner of her death—the purpose of the murderers—it is all written there; is it not?”

Once more he started to the door, quivering with impatience, but the hand and voice of Rolof held him back.

“Not one word of your mother’s fate!” was the reply, which crushed every hope of the young Lord into nothingness. “There are letters from your father to your mother, before their marriage, with some manuscripts pertaining to the ancient history of your house, but that is all.”



Reginald's countenance was clouded in apathetic gloom.

"It is indeed a mystery," he said, and taking the light, gazed into the cavity, which had for twenty years encoffined his mother's form. It was a narrow place, between the huge planks, not more than eighteen inches wide, and scarcely a foot in depth. The bottom which formed the ceiling of the lower room, was strown with dust.\* A feeling of freezing awe came over Reginald as bending down he looked into the aperture.

"Ah! They must have crushed her body into this narrow space," he muttered—"It is too horrible for thought! Her blood yet warm, they trampled her into this cavity, and nailed the board over her mangled face, while the breath yet lingered on her lips."

Reginald held the candle directly over the cavity, and thrust his hand into the dust—or ashes—which overspread its lower boards. Fragments of a dress, which crumbled like the cinders of burnt paper, the moment he grasped them—the half-severed bones of a hand—a mass of hair, long and waving, and yet covered with the mould of the tomb—these were the fruits of his search. At last from among that dust, which had once been Life, he drew a folded paper, dark and clammy, as with the taint and stain of Death.

He opened it, and by the candle-light saw that it was covered with writing, which was in many places, blotted by a dingy red stain; some of the lines were altogether obliterated, and even the plainest words were difficult to read.

He smoothed it out upon the floor, near the cavity, and bent down, his breath coming in gasps, his eye fired with sudden light.

"The twenty-third of November!" he exclaimed, "Joy! Thank God! Here at last we have some words, traced by my mother's hand!"

Rolof Sener heard this exclamation with a start; his face was changed in every lineament; at once he sank by Reginald's side, and looked over his shoulder, his large eyes dilating, and flashing with the intensity of madness.

There was a dead silence, as kneeling together, they perused that blotted record, which seemed, and was in truth, a voice from the Dead.

It is not for us to attempt to explain the full meaning, which that paper was originally intended to convey, nor will we dare to erase its blots, and read the words, buried beneath their dark red stain. But as the paper, the Letter from the Dead, appeared to the eyes of these silent and breathless men, who knelt upon the floor in the dimly lighted room, and followed its every word with eye and soul, we now place it upon this page of our history.

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\* The reader will bear in mind, that the floor of this room was separated from the ceiling of the lower room by a range of rafters, while that ceiling—formed of boards—was in its turn supported by another range of rafters, which were uncovered.

*Alice—*

*Should these lines, traced with a hand, fevered by disease ever meet your eyes, you will learn something of the fate of your poor friend, Cath*

*the day when our ship was boarded by pirates, who threatened to dismantle it, and consign every soul to the waves, unless 'the person and property of Lady Alice, wife of Right Hon. Clarence Albert Lyndulfe was surrendered to them'*

*scene which ensued*

*my poor husband, John Conwell, had died the week before,*

*a poor lieutenant on half pay . . . widow a beggar*

*had received kindness at your husband's hands, while in the West Indies, and . . . I was alone in the world; your life was valuable*

*notwithstanding your entreaties, I assumed your dress, ornaments, etc., and some personal resemblance aided my disguise*

*from the decks of the pirate vessel I saw the Artemesia on her way*

*concealed for a month or more in the City of Philadelphia, and now am a prisoner in a house, in the midst of a forest; how far from the city I know not.*

*To day my persecutors came; they had searched your chests, but without finding the gold or the papers for which they sought. They assailed me with threats, and demanded of me, either the gold plate, or papers, or they said my life*

*from their broken hints, I imagine that your husband was in some measure, connected with an attempt to destroy this terrible organization*

*papers containing matter sufficient to put, in peril the lives of many noble and wealthy persons, not only in England, but in the Colonies, were contained in the chest, entrusted by your husband to the Captain of the Artemesia.*

*slave traffic and pir*

*a hope of deliverance dawns upon me! A poor negro, whom I saw on board of the pirate ship, and whom my husband, had rescued a year ago, from a severe punishment, in Jamaica, has followed me, discovered the place of my concealment, and it is to his hands that I entrust this let*

. . . . . and O! Alice! if the child that now throbs within me,  
 ever should see the light, to you and to yours I dedicate . . . . .

. . . . . be called, Madeline . . . . .

CATHELINE CON—————

Such was the letter, blotted with blood and tears, which Rolof and Reginald perused by the uncertain light, as they knelt side by side on the floor of that room, whose atmosphere breathed memories of crime and death.

“What does it mean?” gasped Reginald, after a long pause—and the letter shook in his quivering fingers. “It is a letter to my mother—written by whom?”

Rolof was silent.

Resting his arm on his knee, he bent his head, low on his breast and remained for many moments absorbed in profound thought.

Reginald gazing over his shoulder, at his motionless form, saw his lips move, while his eyes grew spectral, glassy—as though the Soul of the strange man was buried within its tortuous thoughts.

Again he repeated his question——

“By whom was it written? It is like a dream! Thoughts as vague and frightful as the visions of a night-mare crowd upon me. Speak! You that seem to know the history of my race, as though you were its Destiny—speak!”

Rolof raised his face, and while his gaze was fixed upon the pallid face of Reginald—looking at him and yet seeming not to see him—he spoke, in those measured and musical tones, which at once enchained the listener’s ear.

This appears to me, to be the truth of the matter. The ship *Artemesia*, bound from Jamaica to England, at the close of the summer of 1756, in the second week of her passage, was boarded by pirates. Their chief threatened to destroy the vessel and murder the passengers—in fact, sacrifice every soul—unless the person and property of Alice, wife of the Right Honorable Clarence Albert Lyndulfe, were surrendered to him——”

“His object,” interrupted Reginald—“Wherefore demand—my mother?”

“The widow of a poor officer—named John Conwell, who had died the first week of the voyage—assumed the dress and ornaments of the Lady Alice, and was transferred to the deck of the pirate vessel in her place. It seems she bore a striking personal resemblance to your mother; at least she reasoned thus, ‘You Lady Alice are rich and noble; a husband, a child are yours. I am poor and *alone in the world*. I will as-



sume your place, and leave the rest to Heaven !"—It was a silly and yet a noble thought, especially for a poor woman."

"But the Captain of the vessel was base—cowardly !" cried Reginald—"To permit the sacrifice ! Better have gone down with his ship, or blown her into the air. Better, much better—"

"From the deck of the pirate ship, Catherine Conwell, saw the good ship *Artemesia* pursue her way," continued Rolof, without seeming to regard the presence of Reginald—"Possibly saw the beautiful Lady Alice, waving her kerchief to the breeze. That was the last that ever was seen of the good ship *Artemesia* ; foundered in a gale perchance ; or destroyed by fire, it may be ; she never reached her destination. Of course all on board perished with her."

Reginald uttered a groan.

"As for the widow of the poor officer, on half-pay, we find her next in Philadelphia, whither she has been taken by the pirates and their confederates. How she was taken there, or where concealed it is not for me to say. After a month or more, she was removed to the house of Peter Dorfner, on the Wissahikon, and with her the chests and so forth, containing the property of Clarence Albert Lyndulfe—your father. The good Peter—and may be some virtuous merchants of Philadelphia—searched the chests, stamped with your father's initials, but searched in vain."

"For what did they search ?" again interrupted Reginald.

"Perhaps for gold plate,—it may be for doubloons—I cannot tell. But Clarence Albert, had become a very rich man, in the course of three years. It has been said that he was largely interested in the slave traffic—nay, I have heard it stated that he was connected with a wide-spread organization, whose object was the most comprehensive system of stealing and selling, human flesh and blood."

"A base calumny !"

"Let us for the sake of argument admit that he was connected with this organization. That having made money enough, by its members, he was determined to confide their darker secrets, to the ears of the Royal Ministry, and thus reap a rich harvest of reputation for loyalty and other valuable qualities—"

"This is too much !" cried Reginald—"You slander my father—I will hear no more !"

"Therefore he conceals in a certain chest—confided to the care of the Captain of the *Artemesia*—" continued Rolof, without regarding the angry tone of the young Lord—"A series of papers, which embody secrets, very dangerous to the lives of more than one, rich and titled personage, not only in England, but also in his Majesty's colonies. These papers reveal the existence of a wide-spread organization, whose banner bears but two words, Man-Stealing . . . Piracy. In a word, these papers, strike at reputation, fortunes, lives, and the members of the aforesaid organiza-

tion, gaining intelligence of Clarence-Albert's loyalty—or *treachery*—determine to seize his wife and property, at one swoop.'

"But this is a dream," exclaimed Reginald—"A fancy thin as air!"

"They have the chest in their possession, and with it, Catherine Conwell, the silly woman who personated the Lady Alice. They search the chest, but do not find the object of their search. They threaten the poor woman with death, unless she tells them, in what part of Clarence-Albert's plantations, the secret is concealed. She cannot tell them, for the rather forcible reason, that she does not know herself. And on the 23rd of November—a fatal, fatal day for the house of Lyndulfe! the poor woman beholds the face of a negro slave, who having seen her, on board the pirate ship, is determined to rescue her or die."

"The same who now lives with Dorfner?"

"The husband, it seems saved the black from a severe punishment, the year before. He is grateful; a proof of his incapacity for civilization. And on the fatal Twenty-third, the poor widow—with her unborn child beating in her bosom—writes the letter, which you hold, determining to send it by the hands of the negro to your mother, or to your father. How the miserable African was to find them, is another question, Catherine Corwell seems to have had faith in the fellow—he was grateful. Well—I hope you are listening to my story. I would not weary you for the world."

"You mock me. Go on—go on. Curses upon this scoundrel, Dorfner!"

"Well, to continue my story," resumed Rolof, still fixing his glassy eye upon the floor. "She has written her letter, or rather, she is in the act of signing her name, when her 'persecutors' appear. They question; she cannot answer. They proceed to violence; crush her with blows, or maybe, only frighten her into premature labor. The negro appears, fights for her,—in vain—they blind him with their knives. She dies in the throes of a mother's agony, and they huddle her corse, still warm, into a cavity made by removing a board from the floor. They bury her there, and with her bury the letter, whose last word is the name of her child—of Madeline."

He paused. His voice was soft and musical no longer. It was harsh, husky with emotion, and his glassy eyes, gazing so vacantly upon the floor, were wet with tears.

"Such is the history which I gather from this letter, blotted with the blood and tears of a poor woman. Well—well! What matter's it? These poor creatures are only born for the service of the rich and titled. She died in the path of her duty."

Vain were the attempt to paint the mingled emotions which contended for the mastery on Reginald's face. Kneeling still—the cavity which had

been the coffin of the poor woman, yawning before him—he found no utterance for the thoughts struggling within his breast.

“Madeline—Madeline—” he gasped, as the fast-crowding emotions swelled in his throat, and filled the ball of each eye with injected blood—“Madeline was not my—Sister!”

His soul was tossing in a fiery whirlpool of joy; a mad delighted boundless intoxication pervaded his whole being.

Starting to his feet, he placed the light upon the table, and saw the skeleton once more, but without a shudder.

“And my mother—the Lady Alice—died not—died not—” he wrung his hands in the very madness of delight—“She died not by the hand of violence!”

Meanwhile, Rolof Sener, folding his arms upon his breast, watched his raptures with a calm smile.

“Madeline was a poor girl, after all,” whispered Rolof, “The medal which you found upon her breast, was taken by Catherine Conwell, from your mother. The aristocratic interest which poor Madeline first inspired, seems now to disappear in a measured pity? Does it not, my Lord?”

“She was very beautiful!” answered Reginald, gazing absently toward the light, with his head slightly dropped, and something like a tender memory in his deep blue eye—“Very—very beautiful! And yet—and yet—”

“She was poor!” interrupted Rolof.

“True, sir, true. Beauty by the side of a forest spring, with a milk-pail in her hand, is very touching,—no doubt—but something there is, in high birth and ancestral associations, which gives a nameless charm to a lovely woman, and bathes her whole form in a dim and yet luxurious splendor. I could never touch a woman’s hand with so much pleasure, as when I felt, that the blood which bounded at my touch, had coursed through the veins of women, as fair and noble, a thousand years before!”

The handsome face of the young Lord was warm and glowing once more; every feature indicated that his soul—freed from the pressure of almost supernatural terror—was wrapping itself in luxurious dreams.

“Your remarks indicate a cultivated mind—yes, the delicacy of taste which is born with true gentlemen, and which the vulgar herd can never—never attain:” as he spoke, in his usual tone, so calm and penetrating, Rolof Sener folded his arms and regarded the young Lord with a fixed and tranquil gaze. “Search the history of England’s aristocracy, and what do we see? The men all gallant and chivalric; no brutal murders, no dastardly assassinations; not a single perjury from an English nobleman in the course of six hundred years. Can the world furnish a picture so commanding, so astounding in all its details? Behold the Lord of all noblemen, the British King! From Henry the Eighth, who reformed



Religion in the arms of his courtezans, down to Charles the Second, who made Lust a God, and Chastity a crime—how grand, how heroic the British King! Their noble blood, transmitted without taint, through the course of six centuries; ah, it is touching, it is sublime; this pure stream of aristocracy, flowing on so serenely, through the veins of men, noble above all—honor; and women, too pure for—such slight things as marriage vows! The untainted blood it is that touches us into tears, as if no base born lacquey ever trailed his livery over the velvet of a Ducal marriage bed, or as though the loftiest Dukedoms that England reveres, did not date their origin from the moment, when some new ‘court beauty’ grew loving with ‘Faith,’ in the person of its Defender, a British King!

“A Royal Race, beginning with William, a robber, and ending in our day with George, an idiot. Between this Alpha and Omega, what an alphabet of chivalrous virtue, colored with the hues of every crime, from murder done openly on the scaffold, murder done sublimely on the battlefield, down to the solemn bestialities of James the First, a Solomon, whose life was one incessant Song in praise of filth, whose noblest thought was a Proverb of blasphemy against all things holy to God and man. Range these noblemen side by side, adorn their spotless ranks with the wives of Henry, or the concubines of Charles; let Elizabeth, the Virgin, stand at one end, with her platonic lovers at her feet, and Mary the Butcher at the other, with odors from Smithfield curling like incense to her very nostrils, and then, contrast with these, the embodied forms of Royal virtue and Gentle blood, that rugged Clown,—that base born Peasant—that image of the rugged People—Oliver Cromwell.—You will excuse my warmth, when you remember, that I am an enthusiast on the score of noblemen; and British nobility, its lineage and virtues, was always my passion.”

Reginald burst into a laugh.

“Ha, ha, you are disposed to be severe, my good Rolof,” he said, “There is a sort of pungent malice in your remarks, which gives your conversation the flavor of old wine!”

“Your own family, young Lord, the race of Lyndulfe, present a striking embodiment of the stern, heroic virtues of the British aristocracy—” Rolof’s face was perfectly pale and passionless, his tone low and emphatic—“Did you ever chance to uncloset the pages of your family history?”

“Never,” cried Reginald, smiling—“The very idea smacks of black letter and cobwebs.”

“Yes: you are right, that history is stamped in black letters—the black letters of madness and murder! It is hung with cobwebs—cobwebs which cover the records of Parricide!”

“You take strange liberties, sir. It is not for me to hear language such as this—”

“Ah, and is it so? Your delicate ear revolts at my uncourtly speech! Let me have your hand—soh—this is the hand of a brave man, a Lord.

It can wield a sword or pen a love ditty, or mingle poison in the wine-cup of some beautiful Italian damsel—a noble hand, by my faith!”

Reginald felt the blood rush to his cheek, but the large eyes of Rolof held him motionless. He stood there, helpless as a culprit in the hangman’s hands.

“And yet this hand, within twelve hours, may be stained with the blood of a Father! Pah! I see the loathsome dye upon it, even now—’tis a brave hand!”

He flung the hand from him, as though it had been an adder.

“Your deformity protects you,” sneered Reginald, choaking with anger.

At that word a change, as sudden as frightful, came over the face of Rolof Sener—the black vein swelled out upon his massive forehead—his eyes, sunken beneath the downdrawn brows, glared with deadly lustre. He spoke again, his voice lower and yet more distinct, every measured syllable falling on Reginald’s ear, like a separate torture.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHTH.

### “THE CURSE OF THE HOUSE OF LYNDULFE

You have come to Wissahikon,—to seek the murderers of your mother—to weep over the ashes of Madeline? No—trickster, your schemes are webs for flies—they do not blind the eyes of men. You come hither, in the uniform of his Majesty, your life at the beck of any rebel who may chance to spy the scarlet under the blue—you come hither to prosecute an amour with the daughter of Sir Ralph Wyttonhurst. Do you intend marriage?—Perchance to-night? Well, the bridal party is assembled, the Preacher is waiting, book in hand, when your father breaks in upon the scene, and tears you from your beautiful Leola!”

“He dare not,” gasped Reginald, “By Heaven, he dare not—”

“Said I not so? He lays his hand upon you—’tis a way the Lyndulfes have! You submit, and like a child caught in the pantry among the sweetmeats, are dragged away to receive your chastisement. You would not strike your father?”

The brow of the young Lord was corrugated; he stood panting and trembling, with his hand upon the hilt of his knife.

“He dare not, he dare not,—” the muttered words came through his set teeth.

“Read, O read the history of your race, and then look into the mirror and behold your own visage, stamped with the curse, which has descended from father to son, through the dark course of two hundred years ! The blood which now forsakes your cheek, and rushes to your heart, young Lord, is impregnated in its every throb with that curse. It only demands a Time, a Circumstance, and the work is done, the hand of the Son is reddened with the father’s blood.

“You remember the Medal which you tore from the heart of Madeline ? It bears a cross, a name, a date. ‘EOLA’ and ‘NOVEMBER THE TWELFTH.’ Can you—dare you call to mind, the deeds which through the course of centuries, have marked that fatal day, in the history of your house ? ‘November the Twelfth,’ in our modern language, simply means ‘November Twenty-Third.’ On that day, your grandfather, John of Lyndulfe, was found dead in the park of his ducal mansion, and near him, the mangled carcase of his eldest son, Ranulph-John. What does this mean ? It has but one meaning ; you are a brave man, read it—PARRICIDE.”

No word came from Reginald’s lips ; he gazed into the face of the speaker, and was dumb.

“On that day, Catherine Conwell, the victim in place of your mother, died within these walls, her last groan mingling with the cry of her newborn child. On that day—but let us go back at once to the reign of the Eighth Henry, when the destinies of your house were sown in the luxuriant soil of Murder, \* \* \* \* \* and Parricide. It was in the year 1538, that the baptism of unnatural crimes first descended upon your Race. It was in the silence of night—after a day spent in drunken revelry—that a Father and his Sons were linked together, in a series of crimes, whose blackness might make the Devils weep ; weep for shame, at the thought, that even in the sublimity of Satanic crime, they were outstripped by this poor creature, Man. Three Lords of your house were bound together in the deeds of that night ; one of those Lords, your Ancestor. Of the nature of these crimes, I cannot—dare not speak—but they took place on the Twelfth of November. A year passes ; and one of the Three,—the Parricide, on the anniversary of that day, glides behind the chair of his wife, whose babe is sleeping on her breast. Then, as she turns her face to the setting sun, as the babe awakes, and toys with her flowing hair the Parricide lifts the dagger —————

“From that hour, the Race of Lyndulfe has been accursed. The Head of your house, whether Baron or Duke,—he that wears the title and rules the domains—dies by the hand of his son. Do you tremble : come, this is unmanly ! Laugh, my Lord—you are witty—give speech to those merry jests, which even now flit over your brain.—Dies by the hand of his son, either by accident or design, and from this curse there is no escape ; for it is not the work of an Evil Angel, it is not the judgment of a blind Fatality, *it is simply in your blood, transmitted with your organi-*



zation, bequeathed by every father with the life which he bestows upon his child."

As though a dark truth had changed his whole being, Reginald, with pallid aspect and vacant and lustreless gaze, began to speak in a hollow voice :

"Yes, yes,—one day while wandering in the park, near the spot where the dead bodies of the old Duke and his son were found, an aged peasant breathed into my ear, a tradition of our house—I laughed then, but I shudder now. I remember its every word. *'The Baron of Lyndulfe, who committed these crimes ages ago, was doomed to live until he had expiated his guilt by sweeping every one of his race from the earth ; or until he ascertained that the wife whom he so basely slew, was innocent. From the lips of a woman descended from this wife, and wearing the Medal which he coined in memory of his Father and his Wife—from the lips of a woman, and a woman only—can he obtain the word which will permit him to die. Until that word is pronounced, he is doomed to live and destroy.'* These were the words of the old peasant, and this Demon,—the embodied Curse of our race—lives at this hour, as he has lived for centuries. Yes, he glides by us in the sunshine ; at dead of night, he stands near us as we sleep, and breathes the pestilence of his infernal being into our souls. And I saw him, two years ago—on the rock which stood near the wayside, as I came to Wissahikon—even now his words ring in my ears."

He turned and gazed upon the strange man, whose words had stirred these dark thoughts into life.

Rolof Sener crouched upon the floor ; he had fallen like a man wounded by a pistol shot ; he lay with his face buried in his hands and his limbs quivering as with a death-spasm.

Reginald attempted to raise him, but in vain. His struggles were like the writhings of a person seized with epilepsy—his hands shook with an incessant tremor ; he sunk his nails into the boards, and uttered a low, faint moan.

Reginald turned his face to the light ; it was the visage of a dead man, the features rigid, the eyes fixed as stone.

And the young Lord, heir to the fortunes of Lyndulfe, stood contemplating this inanimate form, with a look of vague curiosity, while the flickering light shone full upon those motionless eyeballs.

"Is he dead?" he faltered, while a shudder pervaded his veins—"Hah ! He breathes again, and something like life shines in his eyes."

"And so, Madeline was not of your blood,—"  
were the first words which trembled from the lips of Rolof, as he looked around with a bewildered glance : "Only the daughter of Poverty and Innocence ! Hah ! Is 't you, Reginald?" he started to his feet—"Pardon me. I have been subject to these attacks from childhood. Some wild words have passed between

us,—it is over now—you would marry Leola, to night? It is well; I will be your friend. The Duke comes to Wissahikon, but he shall not know of your presence here, much less of your intended marriage.'

He seized Reginald's hand while a kindly—almost paternal—smile stole over his face.

"You have seen Leola?"

"I have; her father's house is thronged with guests from the city. We met not an hour ago, in the grove which skirts his place. Something was said between us of a private marriage, to night, but these guests may recognize me as a British officer; I have no other dress than the uniform which I wear. Then there is no clergyman—"

"Go to! These guests are all good Tories; stout loyalists, sworn to the king, every man and woman of them. As for your dress and the clergyman, when you return to Sir Ralph's you will find them both in the care of one person, to wit, the knave Jacopo, otherwise known as the Rev. Jacob James."

"Jacopo!"

"Aye, Jacopo; he will dress you for the wedding, and marry you afterward."

"You speak in mysteries—"

"Is he not clergyman enough, for the occasion? Go to, Reginald! I read your eyes; I translate your heart into words. Leola is a fair girl, beautiful as a syren,—"

"She is indeed beautiful!"

"That tone reveals your heart! Beautiful she is, without a doubt, and her form might lure a saint into the madness of passion; but the daughter of a Baronet is no match for Reginald, heir to the Dukedom of Lyndulfe. Jacopo is a clergyman—dost comprehend, my child? A convenient clergyman, whose signature to your marriage parchments may one day melt into air. Go to, boy—I am your best friend. I serve you and at the same time rescue your House from the shame of an ill-assorted marriage."

With downcast eyes and averted face, Reginald listened, and after a pause replied—

"Yes, I remember, Jacopo is a clergyman. Did he not take orders last year? But I must away; even now Leola looks for me, and ah! I had well nigh forgotten; Paul Ardenheim awaits me at the Blasted Pine."

"Paul Ardenheim? A student-like youth, who strangely disappeared from Wissahikon, two years ago?"

"A noble fellow; every inch a man. He is my friend. He went with me to England; in a word, we are as Brothers."

"He is rich?"

While I have a guinea."

"A dependent then upon your bounty?"

"No! Paul would blush at the idea, with the true instinct of a high-minded and honorable man."

"And yet he is poor!"

"But his heart is true, his arm brave! One night, I was beset by assassins—he saved me at the hazard of his own life. It was a generous deed, but it left a scar upon his forehead. Paul will carry that scar to the grave; and while it endures I am his friend."

"Nobly spoken! Worthy of your race. Go, Reginald, Leola awaits you."

Reginald grasped Rolof's hand, some whispered words passed between them, and then he hurried from that charnel-room, as the light was flickering in the socket. As if recalled by a sudden thought, he turned upon the threshold, and exclaimed—

"This Son of Gaspard Michael—was that also a dream?"

"To-night," replied Rolof, "I will tell you all. We meet at the wedding."

With a light heart and a glad step, Reginald turned away from the gloomy chamber, leaving the skeleton of Catherine Conwell and the memory of Madeline to silence and the grave, as he hurried onward, with the name of Leola on his lips.

Rolof Sener closed the door, and turned him once again to the memories of that silent room.

The light was burning fast into the socket, and its wan and uncertain glare gave his face a wild and haggard look.

He stood perfectly motionless, his folded arms and vacant eyes and fixed features, giving him the appearance of some quaint effigy, on an ancient tomb, rather than a living man.

"Washington comes to Wissahikon, and comes to receive a Crown! The purity of his soul, the sublimity of his patriotism will be tried—it would bring a smile to a cheek of marble—this Hero of an hour will attempt to repeat the old story of Oliver Cromwell! Should he prove true to his mission—what then? Must he still be surrendered, blinded and bound, into the hands of the Royalists?"

"Twelve o'clock to-night will decide it all."

"The Duke, too, comes to Wissahikon, comes to secure his prisoner, and—to confront the Son of Gaspard Michael. Well, well, the Duke was ever a cautious man, full of 'business tact,' and attentive to the main chance"—he smiled.

"Reginald goes to meet Leola, with all the fire of his race in his eye, and solemn vows on his lips, vows, the more to be relied upon, when we remember that—Jacopo is to be clergyman. 'Tis a brave youth, this Reginald!"

"Paul Ardenheim!"

\* \* \* \* \*



"And thus, as the clouds, toward the close of a warm summer day, hasten from every point in the sky, and at the hour of sunset unite in thunder and lightning, so they gather all—these men and women,—and before the morrow comes, there will be a storm.

"And I——"

The light flashed its last, and darkness enshrouded the form of Rolof Sener.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINTH

### "SATAN, THE BEAUTIFUL!"

"BEAUTIFUL Satan!" muttered Paul, as he felt the clasp of that warm hand, which led him gently into the shadows of the wood, and then by an uncertain ray of moonlight, he saw the white robe, gleaming through the twilight, while the waving hair, swept his fevered brow.

His brain was whirling, as in the mazes of an intoxicating dream. He heard a low and gentle voice whisper, "Come!" but the face was turned away. He followed the Unknown in silence, while the blood bounded in every vein.

Through the woods, and down into the shadows of a glen, up the slope of a hill, overgrown with laurel, the hand led him, and at last emerging into the moonlight—it was wan, pale and spectral—he beheld a scene which broke upon him like a vision from fairy land.

Only a moment he paused, to drink in the beauty of the sight, and then the hand of the unknown urged him around.

Let us behold that picture of a moment.

He stood on the verge of a smooth and grassy lawn, bordered by noble pines, and with a mansion, lighted in every window, shining like a funeral pyre through the half-twilight. Bells of radiance gushed from the windows of that mansion of dark stone walls, and high roof, crowned with a tower; and the lawn, the gloomy pines, were touched with rays of living light.

It was the mansion of Isaac Van Behme, the thought rushed over the mind of Paul, but no! This mansion so gay with lights in every casement, this lawn crowded with marble images, which looked like ghosts in the mingled radiance, did not in the least resemble the isolated home of Isaac Van Behme, as he saw it on the fatal night.

Then the ground was wrapped in snow, and the dark evergreens, waved their gloomy branches, about the desolate mansion, like mourners attired in funeral robes and sorrowing for the dead.

But now, the lawn, overarched by the pure blue sky, and bordered by the tall pines, was crowded by throngs of men and women,—or ladies and gentlemen—whose gay costumes shone in the light, and gave a festival appearance to the scene. The quaint attire of the olden time—full bottomed wigs for the men, and head dresses like the tower of Babel for the women, coats with wide skirts, and gowns resembling a peacock's train—in all its varied and ingenious details. Music too, came in bursts of melody, softened by distance and filling the deep sad sky, with a low murmur, like the lull of a distant fountain.

While Paul at a glance beheld this scene, the Unknown was half-concealed from sight among the shadows of the path. The hand still pressed his own, and sent its magnetic thrill to his heart, but the form clad in the white robe, was shrouded by the foliage, and the face was lost in the folds of a veil, whose snowy lace fluttered around the raven tresses, like a cloud of pale and impalpable mist.

They stood, Paul and the Unknown at the entrance of a secluded walk, which extended in a magnificent perspective, until it was lost in the shadows. A line of towering pines, separated the walk from the lawn, and between their huge trunks, the light rushed in upon the gloom, in fitful rays, while their branches, bending to the evening air, formed a canopy overhead.

It was the walk of all walks in the world,—thus on the very verge of light and life, and yet separated from the gay scene, set apart, as a haunt sacred to solitude—for a scene of love, when the heart talks with the silent pressure of the hand, and the low whispers of the lovers, melt into noiseless kisses.

Along this walk, now in light, now in shadow, Paul was led by the Unknown; he did not seem to walk on the solid earth, but to tread in air, trees, mansion and lights, were whirling round him in a mad dance, while a vision of a beautiful form, and dark eyes, flashing through a snowy veil, floated before him on waves of golden mist.

"Who art thou?" whispered Paul—"Am I awake! Am I dreaming? Or is this a delusion invented by Satan, to cheat me into my ruin? Speak! Who art thou? There's madness in thy touch—thine eyes tear the Soul from my brain—I am afraid of this wild loveliness!"

The tresses floated on the light, the head was turned, and a low voice breathed his name through the stillness, and whispered "Come!"

The walk at last came to an end, and the Unknown plunged into the thick shrubbery, which grew in fragrant and leafy luxuriance along the western wall of the mansion. All was dark and noiseless here; while the front was blazing from every window as with a festival illumination,

this wall, silent and gloomy, was overrun by a leafy vine, which clung along the eaves of the roof, and flung its festoons quivering in the air.

Paul was alone in the gloom with the Unknown; he could not see the sky, nor did a single ray shine through the thickly-woven foliage. He could not see the beautiful shape, whose bosom heaved above the loosened robe, nor the snowy veil which covered her face and midnight hair. But the soft,—gentle—yet maddening pressure of the hand, assured him of her presence, and her breath mingled with his own, as her lips pressed his mouth, murmuring—

“Paul, I love thee!”

Very simple words, you say, yet many a time, have words as trite and plain, been warmed into overwhelming eloquence, by a kiss from young lips, lips rife with youth and passion, lips throbbing madness into the lips they press!

Among the shrubbery appeared a narrow door, sunken in the gloomy wall, and overhung by the tendrils of the creeping vine. A white hand was extended—the door opened inward, or receded into the wall—the entrance of a stairway was visible

“Ah! I remember! Here on the last night—” exclaimed Paul, as his confused ideas began to condense themselves into shape.

“Come!” cried the Unknown, and Paul sprang over the threshold—the door was closed,—and in the darkness, he was led upward by that gentle hand.

Suddenly a door was opened, at the head of the narrow stairway, and Paul’s face was bathed in light.

“I remember!” he muttered—“It is the door of the mirror, through which I passed on the—”

He stepped over the threshold, the mirror glided back into its place, and Paul looked around, with the bewildered gaze of a man but half awakened from some luxurious dream.

It was many moments before he recovered his entire consciousness, and gazed about him with a steadfast eye.

A soft, voluptuous light prevailed throughout that spacious chamber. Curtains of lace, resembling wreaths of floating mist, trembled along the solitary window, and gave entrance to the breeze and star-beam of the glorious night. The lofty walls were animated and impassioned with many a beautiful form, that seemed to live, to breathe on canvass, and from the shadows of a niche, sunken in each corner of the room, a pale marble image stole gently on the sight. The floor returned no echo to the tread; it was covered with a velvet carpet, whose warm dyes, subdued by the dim light, harmonized with the luxurious atmosphere of the chamber.

There was a mirror too, reaching from the ceiling to the floor—it was



the secret door of the secret staircase—and Paul as he looked upon it, felt the blood mount to his cheek.

“It is the chamber!” the thought flashed over him;—the chamber in which the Wizard’s daughter first dawned upon his eyes.

But where was the gloomy atmosphere which had once invested the place, where the dark hangings, and dusky floor and sombre couch?

Paul turned, and in the recess, where the bed with the dark hangings, once had stood, appeared a snow-white couch, with a canopy of satin, white as snow, arching above its spotless coverlet.

It was in a word, the luxurious chamber of a Woman, at once refined, beautiful and voluptuous.

“Do you not know me, Paul?”

That voice breathed of the days of old!

She stood before him, like the Spirit of the scene, gathering her flowing robe over her breast, while her hair rested in midnight waves upon her half-uncovered shoulders. Not a Spirit cold or pale, or spectral, by any means, nor a form of marble enshrining the idea of Beauty, as passionless as ice.

It was a proud spirit whose fast heaving bosom, spoke of the impetuous blood; whose large eyes, veiled in the shadow of the long lashes, gleamed with the moist light of passion in its fullness, and love in its most bewitching languor. There was a rose blooming on each brown cheek; an ivory line, gleamed through the parted lips, and on the brow so pale and eloquent, a Thought was struggling into life. It was not the Thought born of a love, calm and tranquil as the stars, but a Thought fiery and impetuous, as the blood which was bloom on her lips and cheek.

Was it the form of a Maiden, just ripening into the consciousness of her being?

It was the form of a Woman, in the first flush of her matured loveliness; a woman whose shape was only beautiful, because its outlines mingling grace, with warm voluptuous loveliness, presented the incarnation of a Soul, lofty in its ambition, boundless in its passion, and—it may be—remorseless in its revenge.

And before this beautiful shape, clad as much in those dark tresses, as in the loosely flowing robe, stood the bewildered man, whose dark attire, displaying a bold, a muscular form, by no means harmonized with the luxurious hues of the dim-lighted chamber.

His pale brow, relieved by his dark brown hair, his boldly defined features shadowed by an inexpressible melancholy, his eyes—so deep, so clear, so full of wondering light—presented a picture which was strongly contrasted with the warm countenance of the beautiful woman.

“It is no vision then,” he said with an absorbing look, and a voice, that rung bold and deep upon the silence of the chamber—“You are before me, once more—living—beautiful as when I first beheld you in this room!

O much more lovely, O wondrously beautiful ! And as I gaze into your eyes, there is no longer a soul left within my bosom, I look and I am lost, for my being is at once mingled and dissolved in yours."

He said no more, but looked into her half-veiled eyes, with a long unchanging gaze.

"Lost, Paul?" she said—"Do you fear me? Am I then hideous in your eyes?"

Hideous! She came gently to him, and laid her hands upon his shoulders, and breathed upon his cheek. Hideous! Her eyes hazy with liquid light were looking into his own—her breast was near to his heart, thrilling his every nerve with its impetuous throb. Hideous! Her fingers trembled gently through his clustering hair; her tresses, floated over his hands; he was wrapt and lost in the atmosphere of her bewitching loveliness.

"And you were lost to me!" she whispered—"Little did I dream, when I wandered forth into the wood, an hour ago, that the next hour, would bring to me, a moment like this!"

Have a care brave Paul! Remember the beautiful Tempter, who maddened you, until the oath was broken, and the Sealed Chamber profaned—remember the words of the old man, whose forehead felt your sacrilegious blow—remember Monk of Wissahikon, the solemn Destiny which cuts you off from all ties of friendship or of love, from all sympathy with the hopes and ambitions of common men.

Remember —

Paul felt his knees bend beneath him, and in a moment, he looked up and saw that beautiful face, glowing over him, while his upraised arms, encircled that voluptuous shape, with a quivering embrace.

It was not love, nor passion, but madness.

"Beautiful Satan!" he cried—for his senses were wild and wandering—his blood was molten flame again, as on the fatal night—"Tempt me to my ruin, and I will give my soul to thee! for thee I crossed the Sealed Chamber, for thee I dashed my father's gray hairs into dust, for thee I became as Cain, a wanderer upon the earth, with a mark upon my brow, that scared even the outcast and the felon from my path. Look! I am thine again!"

And he bowed his head upon her throbbing breast, even as he knelt at her feet, and girdled her in his arms, and wept aloud, for there was Despair in his Love, a bitterness like the Death of a Soul, in his delirious transport.

Woe—woe—to Paul the Monk of Wissahikon.

He raised his face—a Hope had broken in upon his soul.

"Beautiful Spirit!" cried Paul—"Be merciful! Do not tempt me again to my Despair!"

"Tempt you to your despair!" she whispered, as her form was girdled in his trembling arms, "You are dreaming Paul!"

O the wild beauty of her face, as she lifted her arms, and swept aside her raven hair, while her eyes, dilating with an irresistible fascination, shone steadily upon him, and her voice—softened to a whisper—came to his ear, like the voice of his own heart, the very accents of his Destiny.

"Do not tempt me again to my despair," he wildly cried, unable to turn his gaze from the impassioned beauty of her face—"I hear your voice again, and all is madness in my veins. It was that voice, which tempted me, on the fatal night, the night which is graven into my soul, in characters of deathless Remorse. You remember! While Catharine clung to my knees, you whispered in my ear, and I crossed the threshold of the Sealed Chamber, never to know peace or rest again. You remember—"

"The Sealed Chamber!" echoed the beautiful woman, as her robes, floating so loosely about her voluptuous shape, could not hide the sudden swell of her impetuous bosom. "I do remember, Paul. Ah, how pale and terrible you looked, when you came forth from that gloomy chamber. No word for me, not even a look! And when I saw you last, you were near the end of the corridor, and your father come trembling from his room, and—"

"I struck him to the earth—" Paul's voice was faint and broken, his face clouded with an unutterable Remorse—"With this hand I smote his gray hairs."

He was silent—his head sank on his breast, and as if in mockery of his woe, a burst of music, from the lighted lawn, pealed merrily through the window.

She gazed upon the kneeling man, and saw his form, writhe at her feet, with an agony too deep for a murmur or a tear. His hands withdrawn from her waist, supported his bended head, but she placed her hands upon his dark hair, and leaning over him, suffered her tresses to enfold him, like a veil.

"Paul," she whispered, "I love thee. Would die for thee—for thee, tempt ruin and despair!"

Slowly he raised his face, and saw her face so near him, that their lips almost met. Her eyes were shining into his own; her breath fanned his cheek; all the beauty of her countenance, glowing into the life of passion, overwhelmed his gaze.

"Come," she cried, or no! she said it in a voice so low, that her lips did not seem to speak, but her soul—"Come! Let us talk of other days. Nay let us talk of the night when first we met, here in this chamber—Do you remember it Paul? The history of our love is brief, very brief when measured by time, but in eternity when measured by our thoughts. Come, Paul let us talk of the olden time!"

It seemed to him, that he could kneel forever there, bathed in the



brightness of her gaze—wrapt in her look, her accent—enfolded in her midnight hair.

He could not answer her; his heart was full; his eyes began to blaze, not with the serene light of thought, but with the madness of passion—passion, such as stirs the heart, which has not leadened its pulsations, with the loves and hates of common life.

As the pallor of his face, vanished before a sudden warmth—as cheek and lip and brow, glowed in a moment, into a new life—he presented an image of manly, and impassioned beauty

“And the voice spoke my name before we met,” he whispered, “And told you that one day, we should mingle our destinies, and become one soul.”

“The Voice!” she echoed—“Ah! I remember! That Voice which spoke to me, from the air, and guided my life with its words. But it is gone, now, Paul. I have never heard it since that night. But the voice which thrills me now, and melts on my soul, as the voice of my Destiny, speaks from your lips, Paul from yours!”

She bent near and nearer to him as he knelt at her feet, and his face and hers were lost in the mazes of her flowing hair

The mirror reflected those forms, palpitating with youth and passion, and centred among the images of that luxurious chamber.

Was it the echo of a kiss that broke upon the breathless quiet, or the echo of voices, mingling their accents, as the lips—warm with the life of youth—clung together?

“Paul!” she cried, raising her radiant face, as his countenance stamped with the frenzy of passion was revealed—“Now tell me the secret of that well-remembered night. Tell me the secret of the Sealed Chamber.”

His hands fell from her waist; he was pale and cold again. Where but a moment before had been a man fired by passion, was now, only a kneeling form, clad in funeral black, with a face livid as Death.

He rose to his feet and turned his face away.

“There—” he faltered, his face averted, as he extended his hand toward her, “There—Read it all—and do not let it work such madness in your soul, as it has in mine.”

It was a Manuscript which he had taken from his breast, where it had been concealed among the folds of his dress, close to his heart.

Her hand trembled as she took the Manuscript. One gaze toward his form, as with his face turned away, he stood voiceless and immovable before her, and she opened those dark pages stained with the blackness of dead centuries.

She read, her bosom slowly heaving, her eye gradually dilating, with the light of a wild yet fearful curiosity.

Not once did he turn and look upon her.

She read, and a smile gleamed over her features,—gleamed from the

lips to the eyes—only to die again, in an expression of vague and apathetic horror. Her breath came tremulous and broken; she crushed the Manuscript in her fingers, and gazed around with a look of fright and terror, and then—while silent and statue-like he stood near her—she fixed her eyes upon its dark pages once more.

Her beautiful face lost its hues of youth and passion; the hair which streamed over her shoulders, swept a forehead, white as marble, and damp with beaded moisture.

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## CHAPTER FORTY.

### THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE SEALED CHAMBER.

“To night—so ran the quaint history of Monk Eustace—we will look upon the double-crime, whose unnatural gilt, forever clouded the House of Mount Sepulchre.\*

It is a spacious chamber, with a ceiling like a dome, and a floor paved with alternate slabs of black and white marble. Four pillars adorned with fantastic curvings support this dome, and in front of each pillar stands the figure of a Crusader, in the armor of Richard the Lion heart, with a red cross painted upon his breast

The walls are hung with purple tapestry, on which are emblazoned the deeds of Richard the Lion Heart and his knights; here a picture of the shores of Jordan; there, a fray with Saladin; a little farther on, King Richard standing with hands clasped on his sword, while he gazes on the Holy Sepulchre. Therefore, this chamber, illuminated by lamps of perfumed oil, is called the Hall of Palestine.

In the centre of the place, around a board groaning under the weight of viands and beakers, behold Lord Harry and his brave Twenty-Four.

He looks right noble in his attire of blue velvet, set off with diamond stars and chains of gold. His head is proudly placed upon his broad shoulders, and his long golden hair and brown beard slightly tinged with red, gave a noble appearance to his bold features and florid complexion.

One hand upon the hilt of his sword, the other lifted a well-filled gob-

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\* The reader will perceive that this is a continuation of that part of the Manuscript contained in the PROLOGUE at the commencement of this work.

let, as he glances round the table—now, looking upon the wreck of beef, ham, capon, and all imaginable pastries, defended by a solemn array of bottles and goblets, now, gazing into the faces of his gallant Twenty-Four.

Vain were the power of language to picture the contrasted expressions of their various faces—the costumes of every fashion and device—the conversation now echoing in discordant chorus, now broken by peals of laughter.

Lord Harry glanced upon his company, and arranged himself more comfortably in his gilded chair, as he surveyed all these indications of pomp and state, and murmured as the cup pressed his lips,

“It is a right good thing to be Lord of Mount Sepulchre!”

It cannot be denied, that it was a scene of luxurious display, worthy of an Eastern Sultan.

Around the board were ranged a band of attendant servitors, clad in silks and laces, their eyes anticipating the commands of Lord Harry and his Twenty-Four.

The curtains drawn aside toward the north, revealed a glimpse of a garden, full of rare plants and flowers, whose perfume imbued the atmosphere, while many fountains glittered in the light of the setting sun through the thickly clustered foliage.

“A health to our King!” cried Lord Harry, extending his goblet to the Servitor by his side—“A health to the brave Harry of England and France, the Eighth of his name!”

Goblets were raised and drained with many a loyal shout.

“To the King, and confusion to Luther!” cried a fair faced Knight, whose youthful lip was scarce burdened by a shadow of manhood’s down.

“To the Spanish woman—confusion!” shouted a grim old Knight, whose cheeks bore traces of the civil wars.

“To the Devil with the Pope and all enemies of our King!” ejaculated a courtly Lord, whose eyes were affected with an inordinate habit of winking.

Baron Henry, like a true knight and sworn Courtier as he was, emptied his goblet, and exclaimed in a joyous tone—

“Vassals! More wine! We’ll have a merry bout of it together, and hark ye, let our steeds be saddled for a merry ride by torchlight after our feast is over!”

At this moment there was a heavy foot-tramp by the side of the noble Lord, and a hoarse voice exclaimed, with an accent of rude courtesy—

“Noble Sir—the Italian craves a word with your Lordship—”

“Hah! Iron Dickon is’t thou?”

Turning suddenly he beheld Iron Dickon standing by his side. Iron Dickon was a stalwart retainer, who stood some six feet seven inches in his boots, and could fell an ox with a blow of his fist. He looked, indeed,



like Samson of old, encased in a costume of deer's hide, defended by plates of iron armor, with a dagger in his girdle, and a sword by his side. His features were coarse, his head somewhat large even for his large body, and there was a sort of settled vacancy in his large gray eyes, almost hidden by his thick eyebrows.

He was a rude fellow, and his appearance in this scene of wine and laughter was almost as welcome as a death's head at a marriage festival.

In what capacity the stout Dickon served the young Lord, few persons could guess; he could not have been attached to him merely as a common soldier, for they were too familiar, too often closeted together for that. And yet, he was no knight; he was called simply Iron Dickon, and ever since his sudden appearance, some years before,—ere the old Baron was stricken blind—he was regarded by the other servitors of the castle with a feeling akin to fear.

A murmur of surprise, mingled with something like anger or loathing was echoed by the brave Twenty-Four, as they beheld the gloomy retainer standing beside the young Lord.

"Noble Sir—the Italian craves a word with your Lordship—" repeated Iron Dickon, scowling gloomily at the festival array.

"The Italian? Let him wait our pleasure—"

Iron Dickon drew nearer to his master's side, and whispered—

"But he will not wait. 'Tell thy master I must see him this moment, or I depart from the Castle without further words.' This was the message noble sir, which he gave me—"

"Is it so? He shall see me by the Rood—" cried the Baron, starting from his chair, and flinging his goblet on the table—"Woe to the knave if he but thinks to cross my humor. Gentles—" he added, turning to the Twenty-Four—"It is but a matter of a moment's absence. I will be with you ere a goblet is drained."

He turned to the door of the Hall, assuming his cap, which was crowned with white plumes, bound together by a single jewel which glittered like a coal.

"Dickon, I say—where is this knave?" whispered the young Lord, as he drew near the door.

"In the Tower of Saladin, your Lordship," whispered Dickon.

Was it only a fancy, or did the Baron of Mount Sepulchre change color?

"The tower of Saladin?" he echoed—"Knave! How came *he* there? Are there no other rooms in Mount Sepulchre, but you must put this stranger in the tower of Saladin?"

"There are many rooms in the tower of Saladin," bluntly replied the vassal, "on the first floor there is a large hall, which has served us for a guard room ere now. Down among the foundations there is a dungeon. On the second floor where there are two chambers, one opening into the other, I have placed this Italian and his page—"

"His page!" cried Baron Harry, as his foot touched the threshold.

"And on the third floor,—"  
continued Iron Dickon, without heeding his master—"On the third floor, I say, there is a chamber which overlooks the country for a score of miles, and there—"

"Be silent!" whispered the Baron, as he laid his hand upon the wrist of his servitor—"There are other ears listening beside mine."

The servitors stood ranged beside the lofty door, as their Lord crossed the threshold, followed by Iron Dickon.

Curious it was to see the amazement pictured on the faces of the redoubted Twenty-Four. They whispered one with the other, while the wine-cup stood untasted; they cast anxious glances toward the door; and soon a breathless stillness pervaded that hall, so lately echoing with the shouts and laughter. They spoke of various matters with the manner and look of men who talk of things forbidden. Of the Italian, with his bronzed visage and eye of flame—was he indeed a Magician? Had he in truth sold his immortal soul to the enemy of mankind? Of the elder brother, Ranulph, who had died abroad, they also spoke; and one, bolder than the rest, whispered somewhat of the old man—THE FATHER. At the word, there rose an universal murmur, for Lord Harry had forbidden the mention of his father's name or existence, by any tongue within the castle-walls. Strange it was, to see the fear which had descended upon the brave Twenty-Four. *Was this strange stillness, this sudden fear, an OMEN of the CALAMITY which that night befel the house of MOUNT SEPULCHRE?"*

An hour passed and the Baron had not returned.

Suddenly the door was opened; every face was turned to look upon the Baron, and from the manner of his countenance, gather some indications of the nature of his secret counsels with the Italian.

It was not the Baron who appeared.

A man of tall form, clad like a monk, and with a cowl dropped over his face, crossed the threshold, and with hurried steps passed through the gaily-lighted hall. Not once did he turn and look upon the guests; no eye caught one glimpse of his face—he appeared—he crossed the hall—and was gone through an opposite door while the joyous Twenty-Four gazed in each others eyes, in blank amazement.

"The Italian!" the murmur burst from every lip.

It seemed, in truth, as if that tall form, clad in monkish robes, and crossing the marble floor with a soundless step, had imbued the air with a spell, and left a mortal fear in every heart. It is even said, that the fragrance of the perfumed lights was lost in the odor of brimstone; but of this I am not assured.

"The Italian!" murmured the stout Twenty-Four, and set their half-drained goblets down.

Another hour was gone. Some of the joyous Knights were sleeping in

their chairs, others were conversing in low whispers; the Servitors stood idle in the shadows of the lofty pillars, when the silence was broken by a footstep. There was no dismay, no fear this time. It was the bold step of Baron Harry, Lord of Mount Sepulchre.

He crossed the threshold with a flushed cheek and sparkling eye, while Iron Dickon walked scowling and sullen at his heels.

"Gentle sirs, I cry your mercy for this discourtesy," he exclaimed, as he stood at the head of the well-filled board, the light shining upon his noble form, and revealing his animated face, which seemed framed in his red beard and golden hair—"Matters of some importance claimed my ear. This Italian tells me, that he can restore the poor old man, my father, to strength and health again—"

Much wonder looked from the eyes of the Twenty-Four, as they heard the young Lord pronounce that name of all names the most forbidden—"My Father!"

"And while he was closeted with the old man, in the third floor of the Tower, I—ha! ha! 'Tis a merry thought! I was engaged in exploring the mysteries of this Italian's den on the second floor. I 'faith 'twas a rare hour I had there alone. Alone, did I say? Yet hold, I must tell you the history in the proper way. Why sit ye, staring like monks, between the hour of prayers and dinner? Fill goblets, all, and I will tell you the merry history of my adventures."

The Twenty-Four filled their goblets, but even as they drained each cup, their eyes were fixed upon Lord Harry's comely face.

Behind his Lord, his scowling visage half seen above the young Baron's head, stood Iron Dickon, fixed and immovable as one of the effigies which encircled the board.

"Ha, ha! 'Tis a story that will burn your ears, my joyous Knights, brothers of this Companionship, which finds its only prayer in woman's eyes, its only altar in a well-filled board, its only worship in a brimming cup. But listen. There are two rooms on the second floor of the Tower of Saladin, two rooms, separated by a narrow door. Dickon, my gay Death's head, didst thou not force the door,—ha, ha! In the first room I found alembics, crucibles, skulls, and parchments, and all other indications of this Italian's wizard-craft. But in the second room, when Dickon faced the door,—the Wizard all the while was in the room above, with the old man, my father, you must remember,—I found a—page! Not a page from some black-lettered prayer book, my good Knights, but a living, breathing page, bound in a close-fitting dress of black velvet, with eyes like stars, hair like a cloud, and a bosom young and warm as—as—is your blood, after the first cup of rich old wine!"

Wondrous it was to see the curiosity which stamped every face of the Twenty-Four.

"A woman!" the word burst from every lip.



“A woman!” echoed the hoarse voice of Iron Dickon

“The page was sleeping on his,—or her—couch. A light, very dim and flickering shone over her face, as I drew near the bed. She lay with one cheek resting on her bent arm, and her dark hair, half-hidden under a velvet cap, half-straying over her cheek and neck, only made her complexion seem more white and beautiful. Although truth to tell it was rather brown than white,—a ripe brown, with red bloom on the lip, and a rosebud on each cheek. And she was sleeping as I drew near the bed, her limbs clad in black velvet resting upon the white coverlet—a right pleasing sight, by my knightly word. Do you know, gentle Sirs, what thought stirred in my brain, as I beheld the sight?

“‘Ho, ho, you carry it bravely, Sir Sorcerer,’ I muttered—‘You come to Mount Sepulchre, your purpose, the restoring of my good father to health, and sight. Days pass, and my father is still palsied and blind. But you, Sir Magician, console your hours with the caresses of your Italian leman; yes, Sybarite that you are, you turn this chamber of Saladin’s tower, in a bower for your lady-love.’ Is’t not enough to mad a saint? The insolence of this swarthy caitiff?”

“‘Tis incredible!” chorussed the Twenty-Four, “‘Tis hideous! The conjuring knave!”

“But the page?” cried a grey-bearded Knight, and Twenty-three others echoed the question.

Baron Harry seized the cup, and did not take it from his lips until he had drained the last drop. He passed his hand through the curls of his golden hair, smoothed his red beard, and his eyes grew brighter, his cheek became more flushed and glowing.

“Thoughts like these stirred in my brain,—*while Iron Dickon held the door*. I resolved to punish the insolence of the knave, even as he sat with the old man in the room above. Therefore I gently touched the sleeper’s cheek, and at the same moment crushed the light beneath my cap. She awoke in darkness, she took my hand, and whispered ‘Raphael is it thee,’ I answered her with a kiss—without a doubt she mistook me for the Italian.

Then the brave Lord burst into a fit of boisterous laughter, accompanied by sundry twitchings of the face and workings of the eye, which seemed to be well understood by the Twenty-Four, for they laughed and shouted until the Hall of Palestine rung with the deafening uproar.

“*Meanwhile*, gentles, Iron Dickon held the door,” continued the Lord of Mount Sepulchre, “And the Italian, having brought to an end, his interview with the old man, descended from the upper room, but did not attempt to enter the love-bower in which I was conversing with his page. May be he did not see Iron Dickon in the darkness—”

“He passed by me,” said Iron Dickon; “I could have touched him with my arm. Well for him that he did not attempt to enter that room!”

He raised his brawny arm above the head of his Lord, and growled an oath.

"We saw the Italian pass through the hall," cried a youthful Knight "But as to this page—"

"I left *him* only a moment ago. This is my purpose good Knight, and joyous companions! We are very much like monks, here in our good castle of Mount Sepulchre. We pass our hours in earnest worship, but woman's smile, never cheers our prayers,—woman's eyes never shine upon our solemn festivals. What say ye to a beautiful woman, who shall preside at our board, direct our worship, become, in a word, the Lady Abbess of our mysterious rites?"

The Twenty-four had simply laughed and shouted before; now they started from their seats and flung their wine-cups in the air, and filled the room with one thunder cry.—

"The Lady Abbess! The Lady Abbess of Mount Sepulchre!"

"Dickon hie thee to the castle gate. Give orders there, that this Italian never enter our castle again, or if he does, let him come in chains, as our prisoner, and let him be conveyed in secrecy, to the deepest cell, beneath the Tower of Saladin. Dost hear?"

Iron Dickon growled assent, and without a word departed on his errand. He departed through the Western door which led towards the castle gate: the Eastern door he remembered led to the Tower of Saladin.

"It is well,—" cried Baron Harry, his eyes flashing with all the joy of his young blood, "Thus are we free from the intrusion of the Sorcerer. He has gone to the ruins of the Monastery in yonder woods; at midnight he will return, but Iron Dickon will take care of his prisoner. As for the Lady Abbess she shall never behold him again; we can coin some brave story of his treachery and flight. Is it not a brave plot my good companions?"

Amid the shouts and laughter Baron Harry took his seat, and filled his cup and drank to the Lady Abbess of Mount Sepulchre. And the lamps which hung from the dome of the Hall, shed their mild light over the scene, revealing those faces convulsed with laughter and drunken with wine, with the comely face of Lord Harry seen at the head of the board, encircled by its golden hair. And the massive pillars glowed in the light, until their fantastic carvings seemed to live and move, like the uncouth shapes of a dream. And the figures of the Crusaders, clad in the armor of the time of Richard the Lion Heart, and standing beside the lofty columns, with the Holy Cross upon their breasts, gazed upon the scene of uproar, and seemed to smile, as if in sympathy with the boundless revel. The purple tapestry, too, which hung from the dome to the marble floor, quivering its heavy folds to and fro with a gentle motion, caught the rays upon its painted forms, until they also seemed to live and stir. The figure of Richard the Lion Heart alone, with its hands clasped on the massive

sword, gazed upon the Holy Sepulchre, and seemed to turn its eyes away in looking from the banquet scene.

Merry were the songs they sung, joyous the tales they told, without limit or number the goblets they emptied—the right noble 'Twenty-Four. The old knight told many a marvellous legend of their bravery in the wars; the young spoke of the dread King Henry, and his last Queen, the winsome Anne Boleyn, and of the merry time which brave lords and fair dames, kept at his court, where the days of King Solomon lived again, and Love and Religion went hand in hand. 'Tis true the Love was somewhat of the basest, and the Religion seemed but another name for Lust and Murder, but still King Harry was a dread Monarch, and his court was a joyous place.

And amid all the uproar, Lord Harry never ceased to lift his cup, and pledge the health of "the Lady Abbess of Mount Sepulchre!"

"My Lord the Italian has not returned,—," said a sullen voice—"But I have obeyed your behests. When he comes, he will be conveyed, in secrecy to the cell, under Saladin's Tower."

Iron Dickon, that rude Samson, stood at the shoulder of his Lord, scowling gloomily over the festival board.

"Hah! You have done well; the knave shall trouble us no more. What say you gentles?" he cried as he started from his chair—"Shall I lead the Lady Abbess, into this Hall, to receive the homage of her humble devotees? While the Italian rests quietly in the darkness of the cell, shall we confess our sins, to the beautiful Saint, nay the High Priestess of our Temple?"

"But will she come?" cried one.

"Dare you lead her hither?" exclaimed another.

"The Abbess! The Abbess! Let us behold her!" yelled the others of the 'Twenty-Four.

"Dare I lead her hither? Whose voice spoke there! Ha, ha! You will soon behold her, in all her loveliness, at the head of our board. A very Venus, by my faith! In a moment, Sirs, I will return!"

He turned toward the Eastern door, but paused a moment to call Iron Dickon to his side.

"Away, Dickon. Watch by the castle gate. Do not appear again, until the Italian returns."

And as the gloomy Servitor departed by the Western door, his Lord, attired in garments of price, sprinkled with stars and jewels, glided through the Eastern door, his white plume waving over his laughing face.

The 'Twenty-Four were alone with their cups again, but their eyes were incessantly turned toward the Eastern door, over whose threshold the beautiful Abbess was soon to glide, with the step of a Queen, and a face worthy of Lady Venus, the Saint of Love.

Ten minutes passed away, but the brave Baron did not appear.



"What detains our Lord? Does the dame prove reluctant?" said one.

"Ah, ha!" laughed another, "It may be that she recognizes her 'Raphael' in person of Lord Harry. 'Twas a brave trick by the rood!"

At this instant a dagger, dripping with blood, fell upon the table, and clanged against the golden platters, as its blood-drops were sprinkled over the board.

Vain were the attempt to picture the surprise, the dismay of the Twenty-Four. Their eyes were fixed upon the dagger, a long blade with a hilt of gold, and then they gazed pale and wondering into each others faces.

"That dagger was flung there by no human hand!" faltered the old Knight.

At this moment, the Twenty-Four, gazing toward the head of the table, behold—Baron Harry with the beautiful woman leaning on his arm? I trow not. But a tall figure, robed in something like a monkish garb, with the arms folded, and the cowl drooped over the face.

"The Italian!" the cry burst from every lip—"His hand hath flung this dagger on our board. Seize him,—seize him, in the name of our Lord!"

They started with one impulse from their chairs, but not a hand was extended to grasp the sombre figure, which without voice or motion, stood like a dumb image of wood or stone, at the head of the board.

The face was lost in the shadow of the cowl; they could not trace a single feature.

The contrast between this solitary form, robed in funeral black and those gay figures attired as if for a marriage feast, was striking and wonderful.

And yet they did not stir; not an arm was lifted to strike him to the floor; it seemed as though the strange awe, which fell upon the Twenty-Four, was his protection; as though his very presence chilled every heart into ice.

"Seize him," cried the old Knight—"Remember the words of the Baron; seize the Sorcerer!"

A voice came from beneath the shadow of that gloomy cowl. It was not loud,—far from boisterous—and yet it pierced every nook of that spacious hall.

"That dagger is stained with your Baron's blood. Go! and minister to him in his dying hour. You have shared his pleasures; now behold his agonies. He lies on the threshold of the second chamber of Saladin, even, upon the spot where I struck him down."

The hall rang with shouts of vengeance, and the light disclosed faces distorted by rage, but not a hand was raised against the Italian's breast.

"Our Lord murdered! The gallant Harry slain by this Sorcerer!"

"Go!" cried the Italian, still speaking from the shadow of his cowl—"Bring hither the body of the dying man. In his presence, I will submit to your judgment."

The aged Knight spoke to three others—"Come," he whispered "we will do as this wretch advises. But look ye—" he cried aloud turning to the rest of the band—"Look ye, one and all, that the Assassin does not escape!"

With these words, the aged Knight and the three others left the hall by the Eastern door, while the remaining Twenty, folding their arms, stood in dead silence around the board, their eyes fixed as if by some unearthly spell, upon the veiled form of the Murderer.

Not once did he raise the cowl; not once did he remove his folded arms from his breast. Silent, erect, immovable, he seemed to fix his eyes,—from the shadow of the cowl—upon the dagger, which lay amid the platters and goblets of gold, its blade glittering with blood.

"Wherefore didst thou do this thing?" asked one of the Knights, after a pause of breathless stillness.

"Was it for the sake of thy leman?" added another.

"By the body of your dying Lord, I will confess," answered the Italian in a low voice.

The tramp of footsteps was heard from the Eastern door, and soon the four Knights appeared, bearing a body, which was covered by a dark cloth, resting upon face and breast like a pall.

"He is dead," said the aged Knight, and they laid the veiled corse at the feet of the Murderer. "Now sir conjuror, look first upon the face of the dead, and then upon thy death."

He drew his sword, and the others followed his example, and formed a circle around the Italian and the body of the dead. And the Servitors, pale and shuddering, looked over the shoulders of the Knights, and awaited in dumb suspense the issue of the scene. Iron Dickon alone was absent.

A breathless awe such as comes upon the souls of men, when a deed of Murder has been done, and when the very air seems to be hushed by the presence of Death, fell upon the lips and hearts of the spectators of this scene.

"Beneath that robe lies a dead body, still warm still bleeding; and only a moment ago that foul thing of clay, was my Lord Harry Baron of Mount Sepulchre!"

It was this thought that sealed every lip, and roused even the drunken knights, into the consciousness that Death was there—grim and brooding in the luxurious Hall of Palestine.

"Tell us, sir conjuror," said the old knight, even Ralph of Grey-wolf between his set teeth—"What urged thee to this deed?"

A murmur swelled through the hall, and then again that brooding stillness.

The Italian did not lift his cowl. No man might trace the emotions of his face. But he trembled; the hands which were crossed upon his breast shook as with a spasm.

"Gentle sirs,"—he began in a sad and humbled tone—"Ye have read in the Holy Book of a poor man who had a lamb, only one, and even that the Rich Man coveted and tore from its shelter near the poor man's heart—"

"Read us no monkish lesson," growled Ralph of Grey-wolf—"There lies the corse! answer for that deed, and pray; for the time grows short with thee!"

"There was a Maiden, gentle sirs, whom the poor Scholar had gathered to his heart, not as a wife or mistress, but as a sister, a holy thing, too pure for one taint of earth-born love. She had been as a blessing from God, to him in his weary march through the world—she shone in his dark cell, like a good Spirit sent by Heaven, to cheer the brain when it was sick, to nerve the heart when it was faint, to thrill some life into the soul, when it grew cold within its corpse-like shell. Through many a land, that true maiden disguised in the apparel of a Page, walked with the forlorn Scholar,—his good Angel in every dark hour. And when his destiny led him from the court of your King to this Castle of Mount Sepulchre, she was with him still, the only thing for which he lived. Your Lord wished the Scholar to create Gold for him, and spoke something of a sick old man, blind and palsied, whom the Scholar might restore to sight and health. And while the Scholar bent down amid his wierd studies in one chamber of the Tower, this angel in the shape of woman, this pure maiden whose lip had never throbbd to one unholy kiss—even from his lips, who had worshipped her—would come gently over the threshold, and lay her hands upon his fevered brow, and press that brow against her virgin breast."

The knights began to gaze upon this strange man with involuntary interest. So humble and mild his tone, that even Ralph of Grey-wolf was moved despite himself. He dashed a tear away with a curse, and bade the Scholar—"Go on, Sirrah! and make brief your words, for the moment of your death is near!"

"To night I summoned your Lord from the hall. Gold, I assured him, I would create at his command, but he must give me sight of the old man, whom I came to Mount Sepulchre to cure. He denied me; I turned to leave the castle, when at last he bade me seek the old man in the upper chamber of the tower. Ascending a stairway built in the thickness of the wall, I came into the room, in the summit of the tower, and by the light of my lamp, struggling with the moonbeams, that shone through the solitary window, I beheld a scene that might have moved a Devil into shame and tears. The old man was there, his white beard waving over his breast, but his wrists and ankles, were chained to the floor, as though he had been a savage beast. He was blind, he was palsied, but his own child had blinded him, his own child had stricken his veins with palsy. Aye, three years ago, from the bed of fever, the old man was hurled



into a dark and loathsome cell; his sight was gone, his brain was dead, when his Son brought him into light again, and chained him to the tower floor. Your young Lord wished the Lordship of Mount Sepulchre ere his father was dead."

"It is false! Knave the lie blisters on thy tongue!" shouted Ralph of Grey-wolf, but the rest of the 'Twenty-Four' was silent. Murmurs such as the belated wayfarer, hears from the Ghosts that haunt accursed burial places, began to creep from lip to lip.

"And I struck off his chains. And I raised him from the loathsome floor of that foul den. And I, the Italian, the Sorcerer, spoke to him the first word of kindness he had heard in the long night of blindness, yes,—yes—his dead brain throbbed into something like life at the sound of my words. Meanwhile your young Lord, crept into the chamber, sacred with the presence of a pure woman, and in the darkness, aye, like a coward who does a coward's murder in the dark, he went to his infernal treachery. He, pressed that lip which I had never touched, even with a brother's kiss, he dishonored that form, which I had never looked upon, but from afar and with the reverence of a holy worship."

"She was thy leman," said old Ralph bluntly—"This castle is no place for the loves of a wandering beggar and his mistress."

But the 'Twenty-Four' did not chorus his words. Something like sympathy subdued the ferocious resolve, which had impressed their faces; whispering one with the other, they said with a shudder that it was an infernal deed, and that my Lord Harry of Mount Sepulchre, had deserved his death, not so much on account of the Italian woman, as for the blindness and palsy of the old man, his father.

"Still thou must answer for the deed—" said the youngest of them all, and an ominous murmur echoed his words, as sword in hand he advanced from the group—"Answer for it now, and with thy life!"

"First uncover the corse!" said the Italian, clutching his dark robe with trembling hands.

Old Ralph with his dagger between his teeth, and his sword under his arm bent down, and touched the dark robe, which veiled the dead,—

"Hold!" cried the young knight—"Let him answer first how the deed was done. We all beheld thee cross this pall, an hour and more ago, on thy way to the castle gate. Thou didst not return this way. How didst gain entrance to the castle? Answer me?"

The Italian simply replied, in his low sad voice—

"Uncover the corse, and I will tell you all!"

Old Ralph grasped the dark cloth, and the interest of the group, was manifested in their straining eyes, when their circle was increased by a new spectator, a man with haggard face and blood-shot eyes, who stole unobserved behind the grim knight, and looked upon the motionless Italian with a vague and horror-stricken gaze. As every eye was fixed upon the

bony hands of old Ralph, grasping the robe which covered the dead, this new spectator of the scene passed unobserved, until the Italian raising his glance, beheld that haggard face, with its eyeballs discolored with injected blood.

At the sight the Italian started back, wavered to and fro like a man drunken with wine, and then his lips gave utterance to an ejaculation which pierced every soul :

“The Lord of Mount Sepulchre come back to life !” and dropping his face, covered by the cowl, upon his breast, he stretched forth his white hands toward the haggard form.

They raised their eyes, and a cry such as never was heard before within those walls, pealed echoing to the dome :

“The Lord of Mount Sepulchre come back to life !”

It was even so. The haggard form, with dress disordered and golden hair matted upon the brow—damp with beaded sweat—and blood-shot eyes rolling in a livid face, was none other than Lord Harry of Mount Sepulchre.

He gazed into their affrighted faces without a word ; his eyes rolled with an idiotic glare.

“If thou art the Lord of Mount Sepulchre—” the Italian whispered, his white hands extended and his head drooped on his breast,—“Then who was it, that fell beneath my steel in yonder chamber ?”

Old Ralph stripped the dark cloth from the breast and face of the dead.

And every knight moved one step backward, even old Ralph shrank shudderingly away ; the haggard Lord and the Italian confronted each other beside the corse.

It was an aged man, whose gaunt form was clad in rags, but whose white beard, flowing to the breast, was dabbled in blood. The eyes wide open, fixed in death ; the jaw fallen, the hands cramped and distorted, stretched stiffly beside the lifeless frame—a sadder sight the eye of man never saw.

It was the old Lord, Hubert of Mount Sepulchre.

And around this hideous image of Sudden Death, thronged the affrighted spectators,—knights and servitors—every face blank, every lip sealed.

The Italian knelt beside the corse, and stretched forth his hands over its face, muttering to himself in a low voice.

Lord Harry, like a man ridden by a night-mare, looked vacantly into the face of the dead, and then into the eyes of the spectators, as if to ask the meaning of the scene.

The dead awe which rested upon the hall of Palestine, was disturbed by a low and gentle step, and there came a woman’s form, half hidden in the raven hair which flowed to her knees, stealing through the throng, and taking her place, in silence, between Lord Harry and the prostrate Italian.

Through the meshes of her hair, her white arms were seen folded over

her breast, and her eyes, unnaturally large, dazzled the spectators with their brightness, as they vacantly turned their glance from face to face.

"The Italian's leman!"

"So pale and yet so beautiful she stood there, attired as much in the waves of her black tresses as in her loosened robe, that the spectators thought they beheld no living woman, but a spirit from the other world.

"Raphael!" she whispered, bending down beside the Italian,—*"I am innocent!"*

The words were simple, but the sound of her voice seemed at once to break the spell which chained the Sorcerer to the corse, and bound the spectators in breathless awe. At once the Italian started up, and dashed her from him, yes, dashed her beautiful form upon the breast of the dead; at once the knights rushed forward, brandishing their swords, at once Lord Harry, recovering from his idiotic apathy, raised his voice, and called for vengeance upon the Assassin of his Father.

Amid the infuriated throng, the Italian stood erect, hemmed in by a circle of interwoven swords, that glittered in the light like fiery serpents, shut out on every side from hope and life, by brawny arms and faces reddening with the lust of blood.

But at this moment occurred a scene, which, witnessed as it was, by thirty living men, seems so strange, so utterly incredible, that I, humble Eustace Brynne, the writer of this chronicle, tremble as I record it upon my page.

Even as the Knights rushed forward to sheathe their swords in the blood of the Italian, the lights were obscured and the wide hall darkened by a cloud of vapor, which rolled from the dome to the floor in vast and undulating columns. This vapor blinded every eye; no one could distinguish the face of his neighbor; they tossed to and fro like men bewitched, and grappled with each other in the gloom. And from that rose-colored cloud, their shouts and curses swelled into the dome, like the confused cries of drowning men from the vortex of a whirlpool.

When the vapor cleared away, and the lights shone brightly once more throughout the hall, and the knights beheld each others' faces, they found themselves standing sword in hand, around the corse of the old man; Lord Harry the most infuriate of the throng, rending the stillness with curses as he shook his dagger over his head.

But the Italian and the Woman had disappeared.

In vain they searched the wide hall; in vain they thrust their swords behind the hangings; in vain their angry questioning of the frightened servitors. There was no trace of the Italian and his mistress. No one had seen them fly; no door had been opened to give them egress from the Hall.

But they were gone; their place beside the body of the dead was vacant. They had vanished like forms of cloud before the morning breeze.



When this consciousness was impressed upon the hearts of the Knights, they gathered again around the body of the old man, resting the points of their swords upon the marble floor, as they looked with fixed eyes upon the dead. Lord Harry was in their midst, his arms drawn tightly over his breast; his eyes sunken beneath the downdrawn brows, were rivetted upon his Father's face.

No one dared question him concerning his knowledge of this terrible deed, but that which no one asked, he told himself in broken tones.

"It is the work of Sathanas!" he muttered, as though speaking with himself—"My hand was on the door of her chamber, when I heard voices within—his voice and hers—mingling in low and hurried tones. I listened; she was telling him that he had been there, but an hour before, and that he had pressed his kiss upon her lip, and——he denied in cold and angry tones, and my name trembled from his lips, followed by the sound of a footstep, approaching the door by which I was listening. I drew back deeper into the shadows; the door was opened, and by the blaze of light which rushed into the cell, I saw his arm lifted, and saw my father fall bleeding beneath the blow. *He*, too, had been concealed within the cell; he had started up as the light flashed in his face, and received the blow intended for me. For, as the caitiff struck, he shrieked, '*this for thee, my Lord Harry of Mount Sepulchre!*' Then, without turning to look upon the corse, he fled. How came my father there? True, the stairway of his cell opens into the Wizard's room, but who unloosed the old man's chains? It is the work of Sathanas!" he turned with a flushed cheek and rolling eye, to his brave Twenty-Four, "Yes, the Enemy of Mankind hath been among us!"

There was no answer for the young Lord of Mount Sepulchre. The Knights, young and old, looked upon his face and upon the cold face of the dead, and kept their peace.

"What do I see? Do you shrink from my touch, gentle sirs? Is there poison in my look? Come—the good old man is dead—Sathanas has been here—let us forget it all in a brimming cup! God's death, my good companions, your pale visages are enough to make a man afraid!"

The brave Knight seemed to have forgotten the wine-cup and the board, in the dumb horror of the dead man's face. Old Ralph alone gave answer to the Lord of Mount Sepulchre—

"Cover his face, my good Lord, and let us to our beds. As for me, by to-morrow's light, I am bound for France or for some other land, where there is Priest and Shrine, to wash out the stain of sin, from my Soul. This night's work my good Lord, hath made me think strangely of the wild life, we have led together."

The young Lord answered him with a curse, when Iron Dickon's huge form appeared in the Western door, his hand extended in the act of beckoning to his Master. The Baron crossed the marble floor, and conversed for a

moment with his vassal, and after a little while, returned once more to the group, as Iron Dickon disappeared.

"He knows nothing yet of *this*," said the young Lord, pointing to the corse, "And as for me, I had neither heart nor time to tell him now. By my faith, he waited tenderly upon the old man while he lived! He tells me now, gentle sirs, that an hour ago he secured the Italian, and conveyed him by a secret passage to the cell beneath Saladin's tower. You may make of that what you please, but for the present, Iron Dickon brings strange intelligence to us all. What say you, my good Knight? A messenger from our King waits at the Castle gate. He demands instant audience with me. Let the body of the dead be removed; hide it behind the hangings. I will await the coming of this Messenger, where I stand."

They raised the corse, and wrapped it in the sombre robe, and hurriedly concealed it, behind the drapery of the Hall. Lord Harry, with one hand laid upon the banquet table, and the other resting upon the hilt of his sword, stood in an attitude of calm dignity, awaiting in silence, the coming of King Henry's Messenger. His cheek was bloodless, his lips without color, his eyes blood-shot, and yet he was calm. Behind him, ranged in a half circle were grouped the renowned Twenty-Four, their faces, one and all, wearing a look of blank awe, while their gaze was fixed upon the Western door of the Hall. They awaited the appearance of the Messenger with a vague curiosity and suspense.

"He will leave his men-at arms without the castle gate, and enter the Hall alone," exclaimed Lord Harry: "'Tis a privilege of Our Race, thus to receive the Messenger of the King. I' faith he does not seem in a hurry to fulfil his message. Shall we wait for him, till morning dawns?"

The words had not passed his lips, when the Western door was opened, by Iron Dickon, and unannounced—either by trumpet peal or the voice of Herald—the Messenger of the King entered the Hall of Palestine. As he crossed the marble floor, advancing toward Lord Harry, every eye took the measure of his form, and a murmur swelled through the Hall, as the light shone on his face.

He was in good sooth, a man of remarkable bearing.

His form, tall and majestic, was clad in a close-fitting garment of purple velvet, which set off every grace of his figure, and gave new dignity to the kingly composure of his carriage. The velvet, which looked black by the rays of the lamp, was only relieved by a single diamond, which shone upon his left breast, and dazzled every eye. On his right arm, he carried a mantle of dark velvet, which hung in easy folds, as he advanced; and his left hand, grasped his cap, shaded by a cluster of jetty plumes. His brow was uncovered and every eye beheld his face.

It was a noble countenance, every feature looking like the work of the Sculptor's chissel, firm, regular, and cold as marble. Around the great forehead, unseamed by a wrinkle, but pale as death, clustered his hair, in

profuse masses, which seemed even blacker than the mantle hanging on his arm. His eyes, somewhat sunken beneath the brows, shone with inexpressible lustre; they were black, and yet more bright and dazzling than the star which glittered on his breast.

In a word if the form, would have attracted your gaze among a crowd of a thousand, the face would have won your eye, and chained it too, among ten thousand faces. While the form indicated the warrior, the face brought to mind, the countenance of a Monk; not a joyous Monk, red with the juice of the grape, and swollen with good cheer; but a Monk buried in the awful silence and breathless solitudes of his earth-hidden cell.

"Your pardon, gentle sirs, for this unwelcome intrusion," said the Stranger, as he surveyed the knightly throng, "But I seek the Lord of Mount Sepulchre, on business of the King. Will it please ye, to inform him that the Count Capello, craves an interview on behalf of his dread Majesty Henry the Eighth?"

These words pronounced in a measured voice, and with an air of great dignity, produced an impression as sudden as it was various. Not a few of the knights, murmured such words as, "Foreigner! One of the outlandish favorites of the King!" others gazed in silence upon the commanding face of the Stranger, while Ralph of Grey-wolf exclaimed with a deep sigh—"A true Catholic by the Rood! Mayhap a Cardinal in disguise. I will confess to him!"

As for Lord Harry, he felt the blood rush to his face, as the quiet tones of the Count Capello penetrated his ears:

"I am the Lord of Mount Sepulchre, Sir Count," he said, and drew himself up with a haughty air.

"Thou!" cried the Count with a start. "I cry your mercy, noble Sir, but I was told that Lord Hubert was an aged man. I pray you, lead me to him, or at least, give me audience with Lord Ranulph his elder Son."

"I am Lord Harry, Baron of Mount Sepulchre," cried the young Lord in a burst of indignation, for the gaze and look of the foreign Count, roused his blood—"As for Lord Hubert, he is blind and old, and never again will give audience to any one, not even to the King himself, were he to honor my poor mansion with his presence. And Ranulph—he died abroad years ago. Sir Count, I await the message of the King!"

Beautiful it is to see, the native dignity of a high-born English Lord! There was Baron Harry, as gallant a Knight as ever rode to battle, raising himself to his full stature, his proud lip curling, and his blue eyes full of icy scorn, while the Foreign Count, abashed by his commanding presence drew back a step, bowed his head and held his jetty plumes before his face.

"There is the message of the King, gracious Sir," he said, and with-



out raising his face, extended a folded parchment, which was burdened with a heavy seal.

"The Seal of his Majesty!" murmured Lord Harry, as he opened the parchment, "Hah! What is this I behold! '*Thy Brother Lord Ranulph lives*—'" with a flashing eye, he drank in the brief words of that Royal missive.

The hand which grasped the parchment dropped by his side. He turned his face—now bloodless and ashy—toward the Foreign Count, who still preserved his attitude of mute respect, and held his plumed cap, before his face.

"The King writes me that my Brother, Lord Ranulph lives, aye, and by the Mass! that he will be here in a few days. What say ye, my good Knights? Has not our dread Lord, been deceived by some perfidious follower of the Pope!"

There was wonder and consternation painted upon the faces of the Knights, beyond the power of my poor pen to describe. Murmurs pervaded the air, and old Ralph swore somewhat blasphemously, that he was bewitched, and given over to Stahanas on account of his sins.

"Sir Count, perchance you will make plain this mystery," said Lord Harry, in a tone by no means bold or deep, while his pallid cheek and quivering lips, contrasted somewhat strangely with his golden curls and red-brown beard. "You have seen my brother, or is this but a merry jest of the good King?"

The stranger Count raised his head, and the light fell upon his pale visage, as it was agitated by a smile of singular sweetness.

"Brother, dost thou not know me, even yet?" he whispered—"My features I know are changed, but methinks some pulse of our father's blood, throbbing about thy heart might have told thee ere this, that it was I, Ranulph thy Brother!"

The gallant Harry staggered back—reeled wildly like one bereft of reason—and would have fallen to the floor had it not been for the extended arms of old Ralph.

"Thou!" he cried with chattering teeth and corpse-like visage, as he struggled in the arms of the old knight: "Thou my brother! Thou, Ranulph! Nay—nay—Ranulph is dead, Ranulph has been grave-yard dust long, long ago. It is all a cheat—a mockery!"

Then it was that the Stranger, rising to his full height, surveyed the silent throng, with a calm gaze and a sad sweet smile. Every one confessed the majesty of his presence and the noble lineage written on his brow.

"He does not know me!" he sadly said, "Alas! the woeful hour! I come back to the castle of my fathers and mine own brother does not know me!"

He raised the plumed cap as if to hide his tears.

"Lead me," he muttered, in a voice broken and hurried, "Lead me to the old man, my father. Let me feel his hands upon my brow again,—he at least, will know his long lost son!"

Silence reigned throughout the hall, silence dead and leaden as a Wizard's spell. The Knights fixed their affrighted eyes upon the stranger, and with curdling blood, confessed within their inmost souls, that he was indeed Lord Ranulph, or his Ghost. Meanwhile, Harry struggling from the arms of the old Knight, tottered forward and extended his hand:

"Brother—forgive—" he gasped—"I was but a child, when I saw thee last. Forgive and take my hand!"

Lord Ranulph—for it was the elder son of Baron Hubert, in good sooth—lifted his pale face once more, and his dark eyes shone with tears, as that peculiar smile, at once sad and sweet, hung on his lips.

"Thy hand my brother. Hah! It makes the heart swell, to touch the palm of a Mount Sepulchre once more. Wine, my gallant Sirs, wine! For I would pledge my brother in a brimming cup, and my fair dame, shall press it with her lips, ere he drinks, in token of her sisterly love!"

"Thy dame?" exclaimed Baron Harry, and his surprise was echoed by the Knight.

"Behold her! The Lady Eola, wife of Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre!" and from the shadows, came a woman of beautiful shape, clad in a garb of rich velvet, with a dark veil drooping over her face. She had glided unperceived over the threshold, and now stood by her husband's side, her white hand, laid gently upon his mantle. The dark habit which she wore, disclosed the outlines of a form, at once slender and voluptuous, while the thick folds of her veil could not altogether hide the dazzling brightness of her eyes.

Beshrew my heart, but it was right wonderful, to behold the thunder-stricken faces of the gallant knights!

"He brings his good dame with him, from other lands," cried one, "'Tis Venus herself in funeral garb, with a black veil over her face!"

"A form like Anne Boleyn!" exclaimed another.

"And all the dignity and presence of our late Queen!" added a third.

Lord Ranulph took a golden cup, brimming with old wine, from the hand of Sir Ralph, and spake to the beautiful lady, in an unknown tongue. She answered in a voice, low and sweet, but the wondering knights, could by no means comprehend her words.

"The Lady Eola cannot master the rude syllables of our English tongue," said Ranulph, turning to his brother, "But she greets you as a Brother, my true Harry, and consents to press her lips to the cup, ere it passes to yours, in token of her sisterly love!"

True it was, that the brave Harry, pallid and amazed, looked not unlike a man enchanted. He saw the white hand of the beautiful dame lift the cup; he bent forward eager to gain a glimpse of her face, as she parted

the folds of her veil ; but the sight of her lips, warm and red, pressing the golden rim of the goblet, was all that rewarded his gaze.

And in a moment, that white hand held the cup towards him, and as he took it, their fingers slightly touched each other. 'Twas a circumstance of no moment ; but that touch, slight as it was, filled his blood with fire.

“ Drink, my brother, drink to the return of Ranulph, Lord of Mount Sepulchre ! Drink to the Lady Eola, his own fair dame, and henceforth thy loving Sister, Harry ! ”

As he spoke, the Lord Ranulph contemplated his brother with an earnest look, while his great forehead, grew radiant, as with a joy too deep for utterance.

Harry of Mount Sepulchre,—no longer Lord, but simply, ‘ the Lord’s younger Brother,—’ slowly raised the cup, turning his gaze from the veiled Eola to the Lord Ranulph, as the golden rim touched his lip.

The golden rim touched his lip——

From that instant the place of the brave Harry, in the Castle of his Race, was vacant forever.

Even as his lip touched the golden rim of the cup, he fell dead at his Brother’s feet, his face pressed against the marble floor, and his hands resting by his side, without one convulsive tremor. No groan came from his lips, as he fell, nor did his eyes roll and glare, as if struggling with the night of death. He touched the cup—he fell. That was all. Every eye beheld it. When old Ralph came to him, thinking that he had fallen into a swoon, and tried to raise him from the floor, the body slipt from his grasp like a pulseless thing of wood or stone. The gray-haired knight turned him to the light, and his face was seen by every eye. There was no blackness on it, but a rosy blush pervaded the cheeks, and the eyes, fixed but not glassy, lay dull and leaden, under the half-shut lids. He was dead. The golden cup lay near him, and a strong odour,—like the perfume of old wine, mingled with the scent of laurel blossoms—pervaded the Hall of Palestine.

Never in all the world was there such a Night as this, whose every hour was marked by a Death or a Crime. The nameless wrong committed by Harry upon the Italian woman—the murder of the old man, by the Italian Sorcerer—the sudden death of Harry, before his brother’s eyes—these deeds all took place on the night, which marked the return of Lord Ranulph, to the Castle of his ancestors.

The hearts of the spectators were too full for speech ; clad in their festival attire, the gay Knights, gay no longer, looked in the dead face of the brave Harry, in dumb apathy.

The veiled lady clasped her hands, and murmured a prayer, in an unknown tongue while a shudder, agitated her beautiful shape, from head to foot.

Lord Ranulph stood for a moment, horror-stricken and spell-bound like



the rest, his gaze fixed upon the face of his dead brother, while his broad high forehead was darkened by a single vein, swelling upward, from between the eyebrows. At last a smile broke over his face; a smile sad as a star-beam twinkling through the gloom of a chancel:

"He is dead! My Brother?" he said in a subdued tone: "He has died of a strange disease of which I have heard in foreign lands. A disease that turns the avenues of the heart to bone, while the cheek is full of life. \*Slowly, silently, through the course of long years, this disease builds up the channels of the heart, until at last, when some sudden emotion, makes the blood bound like a torrent, 'the work is done,' the heart throbs no longer, and life passes away, without a sigh. My poor brother died of joy; the emotion was too strong for him! A terrible disease!"

He knelt beside his dead brother, while old Ralph of Grey-Wolf muttered with an idiotic stare:

"A terrible disease, by the Mass, and—a right strong smell of laurel leaves, or laurel blossoms, by my soul!"

And these are the deeds which took place on the night, when Lord Ranulph came home to the Castle of his fathers. And I, Eustace Brynne, who have written this history, which is intended to be deposited in the archives of Mount Sepulchre, do hereby avow, on mine own knowledge, that these are the deeds which were done, and these the words which were spoken, on that fatal night.

And all other histories of that night, and all rumors which conflict with this chronicle are lies, born of the Devil and the Pope, and uttered by their minions, in order to taint the good fame of the House of Mount Sepulchre. So that their lies may be known, and branded forever, with their proper infamy, I will here, add certain of the rumors, which have been raised by the Pope and the Devil aforesaid, against the House of Mount Sepulchre.

I. *That the Italian magician, and my Lord Ranulph were the same person.* In support of this rumor it is stated, that my Lord Ranulph studied the black art in outlandish parts, and came to the Court of King Harry, disguised in his Sorcerer's robes, and was there encountered by Lord Harry, who besought him ardently to come to Mount Sepulchre, and turn him some lead into gold straightway. Ranulph wishing to see with his own eyes, how the young Lord bore himself, to his Father and to the vassals of the Barony, accepted the proposal of Baron Harry, and came to the Castle, with his outlandish wife, disguised as a page, having at the same time, the letter of the King about his person. This is a most atro-

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\* An anachronism? Had Lord Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre, any idea of the circulation of the blood?

cious falsehood. Were it to be believed, only for a moment, we should be forced to regard Lord Harry, as the wronger of his brother's wife or mistress, and Lord Ranulph as the Murderer of his Father. 'Tis a fiendish calumny.

II. *That the death of Lady Eola, which took place on the Twelfth of November, 1539, (something more than a year after the events recorded, as aforesaid,) was the work of her true Lord and Husband, Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre, because he was poisoned with the thought, that the child sleeping upon her bosom was not \* \* \* \* \** This is indeed a lie worthy of Satan or the Pope. In order that future generations may know the truth of this matter, I, Eustace Brynne, sometime Prior of the Monastery, but now a true believer in our gracious King, have written this Chronicle, at the command of the noble Lord Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre.

Thus ended the Manuscript, written by the Monk of the Sixteenth Century. It was connected with other Manuscripts, written by various hands, and narrating the history of the House of Mount Sepulchre from age to age, until the middle of the Eighteenth Century.

But the beautiful reader had not courage to proceed. The mass of Manuscripts fell from her stiffening fingers, and as they fluttered to the floor, the harsh sound disturbed the breathless stillness of the place.

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## CHAPTER FORTY-FIRST.

### WHAT PAUL BEHELD IN THE SEALED CHAMBER.

"IT is too horrible for belief! The Father murdered by his own child, the brother poisoned by the brother, and the beautiful woman sacrificed by a nameless outrage. A maze of misery and crime! It is indeed terrible—the very paper on which these deeds are written, breathes of the charnel. But Paul, you turn your gaze away. You do not look upon me. Tell me, I beseech you, what has this Revelation to do with your fate."

And the beautiful woman, whose death-like cheek contrasted with her raven hair, gave a wierd and spiritual loveliness to that face, not long ago so ripe with passion, glided over the floor, with noiseless steps, and laid her hands upon the shoulders of Paul Ardenheim.

He stood motionless, his averted face buried in his hands. He felt her

touch, but did not turn and look upon her, for the nameless revelations of the Sealed Chamber—revelations even more dark and harrowing than those embodied in the Manuscripts—now clouded his whole being with a stifling horror.

“Paul!” she whispered—“I dare not read farther; I have not the courage. The very touch of those pages chills my blood. Speak to me, Paul. Tell me the secret of this mystery.”

“Read on,” muttered Paul, still hiding his face in his hands—“Read on, and learn the history of our race, and drink in, with every page, some portion of the madness which has cursed my existence, since the fatal hour, when your voice—yours—persuaded me to cross the threshold of the forbidden chamber. Read on!”

“Do you reproach me, Paul?” whispered the Wizard’s child.

He turned and confronted her, grasping her wrist, while the light fell upon his ashen and colorless visage.

“Reproach you! No! No! For so much sorcery there is in your look, so much witchcraft in your tone, that even now, as I stand before you, at once conscious of your presence and of my own dark fate, it seems to me, that for you I would sacrifice my immortal soul,—yes—at a word, a look from you I would strike my father’s gray hairs into dust!”

He had been wild,—mad—before, but now his pale face and settled tone, his look at once fixed and dazzling, overwhelmed this beautiful woman with a freezing awe. His wild reproaches, his wandering ejaculations, his eyes rolling vaguely, his cheeks flushed with passion—all these she could have borne, and borne with a secret triumph—but this calm madness, this conscious despair, palsied every vein with the leaden apathy of terror.

“Take up the dark record, once more,” he exclaimed, while she felt his hand, as it clasped her wrist, grow cold as ice: “Let not the breath of the charnel fright you, let not the atmosphere of unnatural crimes make your soul afraid. Read on! Learn the history of our Race by heart; steep your soul in every damning detail. Learn how Lord Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre, stained with the blood of father and brother, crept behind the chair of his beautiful wife, and sheathed his dagger in her bosom, even as her babe was sleeping there. Learn how the man who had stabbed his father, and poisoned his brother became the Assassin of the woman, whose love and life had been mingled with his in the veins of that innocent child. Nay, do not tremble and turn pale; you have asked of me, the Secret of the Sealed Chamber; I will tell that secret, although every word costs me an agony, deeper than the tortures of the damned.”

He paused for a moment, and passed his hand over his forehead; the beautiful woman shuddered as she beheld the expression of his features.

“The child was not his own. The blood that flowed in its veins, was poisoned in its every throb, by his brother’s unnatural crime. Thoughts



like these cankered the soul of Ranulph; his heart became corroded by suspicion. Therefore, he stabbed his wife; stabbed the pure woman, who at least, had been no partner in his brother's wrong. She was dead; the child smiled in his face from her mangled bosom. But the history of our Race does not end here. That child grew to manhood, and became the Lord of Mount Sepulchre. He, too, became a father: and he, like his Grandsire, died by the hand of his son. Since that hour, through the course of two hundred years, there have been eight Lords of Mount Sepulchre, and every one has gone to his grave a Parricide, slain by the hand of Parricide. You will say that there is madness lurking in our blood, from the moment of birth; you will attempt to explain this red history of unnatural murder, by the idea of a constitutional malady, transmitted from father to son, for two hundred years. But no! no! Had you crossed the forbidden threshold, and seen what I saw, and stood face to face with Fate, as I stood, hollow words like these could never pass your lips."

"Paul! Your words fill me with horror beyond the power of utterance" cried the Wizard's child, attempting to free her wrist from the clasp of his icy hand.

"Read on! Take up the blood-red record once more. You will there discover, that my father, the younger son of this accursed House, soon after the last Parricide, which took place not more than twenty years ago, determined to leave the Old World, and bury himself and his children in the profound solitudes of the New. He was resolved to save me, his only son, from the curse of our house. Therefore, he renounced the world, gave up his very name, and crossed the Ocean. No human eye tracked his course, no human eye recognized in the pale old man of Wissahikon, the Last Lord of Mount Sepulchre. He had defied fate; he had evaded destiny. The hand of his Son should never be stained with the guilt of Parricide. This was his thought; a thought which breathed a blessing on his solitude, and turned the wild Wissahikon into the very garden of God. Now mark the sequel. All his plans—elaborated and woven together through the years of a life-time—were crushed, not in a day, not in an hour, but in a moment. Scattered to air, by the breath of a woman!"

He fixed upon the Wizard's daughter the light of his eyes, flashing with scorn, and every lineament of his face was agitated by a smile,—a smile which was Satanic in its very mockery of joy.

"A woman!" he repeated: "Her breath destroyed the Hopes of a life-time." Again he smiled in mockery.

"Nay, you must listen. My father had preserved that Record of Mount Sepulchre, in all his wanderings. He had concealed it within the chamber, whose door was marked with a cross. It was his thought, that his Son should never know the history of the parricidal race, until the Father

was dust. And even then, this Son could not be won from his seclusion, into the great world, by the temptations of rank and power, for the name of Mount Sepulchre had long ceased to the title of his Race. It was the name which our house had borne in ages past, but it had been replaced, for a hundred years at least, by other names and more swelling titles. Therefore, Paul, the son, reading that Chronicle after the death of his Father, would not dream that his Race, or their once immense possessions, had an existence any longer. He would only know, that he was the last of the Mount Sepulchres; that he was buried in the forests of Wissahikon; and that the once boundless domains of his fathers, their Castles in England and Germany, their gold counted by millions, and their broad lands measured by leagues—all were now embodied in the—ruined Block House of Wissahikon. That the great name of the Race, their fame ennobled by titles only second to Royalty, had dwindled down into the name of the friendless boy—‘Paul Ardenheim!’”

Again he paused—looked sadly in her face—while her eyes brightened with a Thought which she dared not speak.

“His race may exist at this hour, in all their wealth and power. Another may count his gold, and wear his titles, while the true Lord remains unknown and friendless among these forests.”

And as Paul stood gazing in her face,—his death-cold hand upon her wrist—the music from the lawn came gushing through the window, like the joyous peal of a Bridal Festival.

“Read that record, beautiful woman!” Paul continued, after a breathless pause. “Then you will know something of the mysteries of that fatal chamber; but the full mystery—the complete history of the hour which I spent there—I may never tell to mortal ears. But listen! There, within that Sealed Chamber, which I had entered by a Perjury—entered because the sorcery of your eyes and voice had maddened me—there, I stood face to face with Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre, who lived three hundred years ago.”

“Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre! ‘This is a dream!’” The hand which clasped her wrist, had changed from ice to fire.

“I stood face to face with him, and looked into his eyes, and heard his voice. It was not a Corpse which touched me with its hand—it was not a Spirit evoked from the Sepulchre, like Samuel of old, which conversed with me as I stood enveloped in the horrors of that forbidden place. But it seemed to me, as if I stood in the presence of a Corpse, animated by a living Soul. Even now, my heart writhes and grows cold at the mere remembrance of that hour.”

As though the memory of that incredible interview, had transformed him into the very image which his imagination pictured—*a dead body instinct with a living Soul*,—Paul Ardenheim paused, his lips moved but framed no sound; his form was motionless, his face without life or color

his eyes alone, shining with intense light, told that the life still lingered in his breast.

And the Woman so imposing in her voluptuous beauty, this incarnation of all that is lovely or bewitching, among the forms of external nature, this creature whose touch was madness, whose kiss kindled every throb into living flame, whose glance paralyzed the reason, or only roused it into frenzied action,—even She shrank with terror from the face of Paul Ardenheim. Her finger on her dewy lip, one hand placed upon her breast, as if to still its throbbings, she retreated a step, and gazed upon him through the meshes of her unbound hair.

At this moment she looked like Esther, beautiful and voluptuous, queen-like in form and stature, and yet with an unutterable fear, creeping through every vein, from her heart to her eyes. Yes, she seemed like the impassioned Jewess, summoned suddenly from the silence of her luxurious chamber, by the death-shrieks of her murdered People, or by the blind anger of her Monarch-Husband.

“Paul you spoke with Ranulph who lived three hundred years ago,” she exclaimed after a pause, and her low voice, resounded through every nook of the still chamber: “You stood face to face with this living Soul, enshrined within the breast of a Corpse? It was a dream Paul, only a dream, believe me. Your imagination was excited to madness, by the revelations of this manuscript.”

Paul fixed upon her a vacant gaze, which looked into her eyes, without seeming conscious of her presence.

“I crossed the threshold, and at once my light was drowned in a luminous radiance, which shone around the fatal chamber. In the centre of that radiance appeared the corpse-like form, and from the dead face, the eyes gazed upon me, and at the same time, filled the place with light, unlike the rays of sun, or moon, or star, but resembling the pale radiance which flutters over the graves of the newly-buried dead. And he spoke to me; his lips did not move, there was no sound, and yet I heard his voice. It seemed, as though that Soul, enshrined in the breast of a Corpse, conversed with mine, in the language of the other World, without one accent or syllable of mortal speech. Was this a dream? Oftentimes I have tried to hug that idea to my soul, but in vain. It was no dream, but reality, as cold and palpable, as that which thrills through your frame, when your hand, for the first time, encounters the dead face of a beloved one.”

“Do you remember the words, Paul?” faltered the Wizard’s daughter.

“Could you look upon my heart, after death, you would behold those words written there—yes, stamped upon my very being.

“Until the last descendant of that incestuous Child is swept from the earth, I am condemned to live. From the hour, when my hand, smote the bosom of Eola, until this moment, when I stand face to face, with you, Paul Ardenheim, I have walked beside the Lords of your race, and in-



fused the poison of my accused existence, into their being. One by one they have died; the Parricide father by the hand of the Parricide son; it was my Soul, that prompted every murder; it was I, that nerved every arm, and I—in spite of all my Remorse—have stood smiling, while Parricide after Parricide, was gathered to the grave-yard dust.

‘Think not to escape me, Paul of Ardenheim, in whose soul I recognize some portion of my own. Your father has traversed half the globe; he has forsaken the wealth, the honor of his race; he has reared you afar from the world, reared you in ignorance of your race, your fortunes, and your very Name. But I, Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre have been near you, from the hour of birth; have watched every moment of your existence; have loved you, as I saw your Mind grow into shape and power, and at the appointed time, I will nerve your arm, for the deed of Parricide.

‘When the hour comes your Father will die by your hand.

‘Because I have looked upon your life with love, because I have been somewhat won from the cold horror of my existence, by the spectacle of a heart, so young and brave as yours, nurtured into vigor, even amid these virgin solitudes,——do not think that my arm can spare, or my soul relent.

‘I can never know the blessing of Death, until all—all—of the race of the incestuous Child, even the child of Eola, are swept from the face of the earth.

‘When the last is dead, then, and then only, I can die.

‘It is true, that sometimes,—after long intervals of hopeless Evil—a hope has dawned upon my soul. From a woman, descendant from Eola, and like Eola in mind and form, I may obtain the blessed words, which will permit me to—die. Those words, nothing more, than the last accents, which fell from her lips; accents which will assure me, that she, no willing partner in my brother’s crime, and that the child which slept upon her bosom, as I killed her, derived its life, from my veins. Yet this Woman cannot appear, until the eighth Lord of your race, has fallen by the blow of Parricide. And she must wear upon her bosom, a Medal, which I hung around the neck of my dead wife, and buried with her corse, on the Twelfth of November, 1539; a medal, which I had prepared in anticipation of her death, bearing her name, the date of her murder, and the sign of the Cross.

‘This medal, or this embodied record of my crime, I saw twenty-one years ago—saw it for the first time, since Eola’s death—and upon the breast of a beautiful woman. But the Eighth Lord, the head of the eighth generation was not yet dead. With the consciousness that this medal, was at once, the token of past crime and future forgiveness, I replaced it upon the neck of the beautiful woman, descended from Eola, and resolved to complete the long chain of Parricide, with the death of your father’s

father, the Eighth Lord of Mount Sepulchre. He died, by the hand of your father's brother, but the beautiful Woman was dead. She was buried in the Ocean. The medal lies there, with her bones. That hope has gone out in utter darkness; I am left to my Remorse and to my career of Crimes.

‘Do not fancy, that it is an impalpable Spirit, a vague form of air, that converses with you now. Paul Ardenheim I live,—have lived, for well-nigh three hundred years. Learn at once the mystery of my being. When I was young, when I first left my home of Mount Sepulchre, for other lands, a latent hope was in my breast, that I might one day, achieve the great secret, for which the Seers of ages had sought in vain, and become Immortal, even upon this earth. The days and nights of long years, the toil of my hand and my brain, were surrendered to this search. At last, beneath the foundations of old Rome, in the Catacombs, those awful cities of the dead, which spread beneath the feet of living millions, I grasped the Secret; the Problem of ages was solved; the Truth for which the Seers of forty centuries had sought in vain, became mine. I discovered the hidden principle which Men call life, and even from the forms of the dead, I wrung the knowledge, how to perpetuate that Life, and make it Eternal even upon this earth.

‘But at the same time, there passed from my Soul, all power to believe in another World; all consciousness of a race of beings, superior in intelligence to Man; all knowledge of an all-paternal Creator, whom men call God. To me, from the moment when the pulses of a deathless life, stirred in my veins, there was no longer Another World, nor a state of being, higher and better than this earth; nor Saint, Angel, nor God. In a word, the *power to believe*, passed from my nature; I became conscious that I was to live on this earth, while the earth itself endured; to grow old in knowledge; to become familiar with every principle of the machinery which moves the Universe; and at the same time, to be as utterly incapable of Faith—even Faith such as lights the beggar's heart, and throws a halo round his very rags—as the dumb stones on which I trod.

‘Was this existence, this Life which I myself had won, for Good or for Evil?

‘It seemed to me, as I stood palpitating with my new being, amid the damps and shadows of those earth-hidden Cities of the Dead, that I might become the Destiny of mankind. Watch over them, while ages rolled away, and replace Superstition, Bigotry and War, with the calm and omnipotent Unity of Universal Brotherhood. That I would reveal the great secrets of the Universe, to a chosen few, and teach men to love one another, by a simple disclosure of the sublime harmony, which pervades all nature, from the Star that rolls surely on its way, through an orbit of millions of miles, to the little flower, that only demands an inch of earth and a drop of water for its existence. Yes, I said with unutterable rapture, I

will gradually lift mankind into my own walk of Being. From year to year, from age to age, I will swell the number of my chosen band, and encircle myself with men re-created and purified by the Knowledge of the great laws of the Universe. And at last, when ages shall have passed away, I will select some one, superior to all others, in love and power, and fill his veins with the same immortality that throbs in mine. Should he prove faithless to his trust, and use his deathless life for purposes of Evil, I can, at the worst, meet him in a sublime although terrible combat—oppose my own immortality to his—track his footsteps over the globe, surround him with the atmosphere of my Power—point him out to all the world, even to the humblest of men, as the Wretch who would mar the Divine Harmony of the Universe, by the spasmodic throbs of his own selfish ambition:

‘Divine Harmony of Universe?’

‘It is the law that guides the Star more surely on its accustomed course, than your arm, in the moment of full health, can follow the impulse of your Will. But let the Star depart but a moment from its orbit, and lo! entire creations of Stars, of Suns, of Worlds, are wrecked in hopeless chaos. And the man who suffers himself to perpetrate a wrong upon man, his brother, arrests the very Order of the Universe with the deed; and creates a chaos more dark and discordant, in the vast family of souls, than the wandering Star in the boundless fraternity of Worlds.

‘Thus I mused beneath the foundations of old Rome, in the Cities of the Dead.

‘It was my purpose, to use my deathless existence for the Good of mankind.

‘Behold the manner in which this purpose of boundless Good was wrecked into a Necessity of hopeless Evil.

‘A memory of Home came over me. I thought of my aged father, of my younger brother; I resolved to leave the scene of my deathless toil, the catacombs which had been the Alembic of my deathless life, and return to England, and look once more upon the faces of my people.

‘Eola was my companion. Her previous history need not be told, nor is it for me to relate the manner in which her life was first interwoven with the life of a man like me—a Student in the vast labyrinth of unrevealed Nature—a Scholar, whose book was the Universe, whose Masters were the dead Seers of forgotten ages.

‘But she had joined her fate with mine. When my brow was pale with the horror of the night-long watch among the dead, when my eye was mad with the glare of Thought,—Thought indulged and prolonged at the expense of the physical being, until the heart was pulseless and the nerves palsied—then Eola, who knew no learning but the instinct of Woman’s all-trusting Faith, would call me back to life with her presence, wake the heart into motion with her voice, thrill the nerves into serene



consciousness with her touch. In those moments, she was to me what a calm lake is to an arid landscape,—what the eye is to the human face,—what the first gleam of life was to the visage of the dead Lazarus.

‘She was beautiful beyond all the daughters of earth. Had it not been for the pure Soul, which shone calmly from her eyes, her form would have presented only a type of animal beauty in its most exciting shape. All that you can imagine of physical loveliness was hers. The rounded limb, the clear skin, ripe with the young blood of virgin passion, the bosom blooming with the very fulness of life, the gesture that bewitched and the voice that held you dumb with its ever-changing music,—all that you can picture of shape, color, sound, life, combined in one breathing Harmony—all were hers. Never did the eye of the sensualist rest upon a more voluptuous shape—never did the gaze of the devotee linger upon a face more hallowed by calm and spiritual beauty.

‘Such was Eola—a pure Soul, incarnate in a young and passionate form.

‘And she was mine. Think not that her lip had ever quivered to my kiss; do not for a moment dream that all this treasure, of untold loveliness, ever became even by a single caress, less pure, less virgin, than when it first came from the hand of unpolluted Nature.

‘Eola was my virgin-wife. Never should the rites of our marriage ripen into the consummation of full enjoyment, until her Being became deathless as my own, and until the Wife, instinct in every vein with the pulses of immortal life, might become the Mother of a deathless child.

‘This was my resolve. For I had resolved to raise Eola to my own sphere; to lift her from the decay that withers and the death that corrodes, into beauty that could never fade, and youth that could never die.

‘And with this resolve impressed upon my being, I came to England. As the way-worn Scholar, under a false name and in an humble disguise, I came to my father’s Home. Where I expected to find an aged man, no less rich in years than in the respect of men, a Patriarch encircled by his grateful People, I only found a blind old man, chained and imprisoned, like a savage beast. Where I had hoped to meet an honorable Brother, with truth in his heart, and the atmosphere of a generous soul, kindling noble deeds into life wherever he turned, I only met a brutal Debauchee, surrounded by brutal Sensualists, and growing more debased every hour in an atmosphere of pollution. From this wretch nothing was sacred. The poor man, the serf who was forced to dig for a crust, and barter life itself for an untimely grave—the mistaken vestal, who had thought to crush all the passion and the hope of her young life, within the walls of a Convent,—the good old man, the Father, who for years had looked forward to old age, as the appropriate time for the full development of his son’s reverence and filial love—all these, alike, were the victims of the base animal, My Brother. The Serf to his mere love of cruelty; the Nun to his brutal lust; the Father to his no less brutal avarice.

‘And this wretched animal, this creature, who ere his youth was gone, had grown hoary in the hyena’s appetite, and the tiger’s lust,—this Brother of mine, it was, who mingled the pollution of his being with the pure life of Eola, and made her bosom thrill with the life of a child as base as himself.

‘Eola became the Mother of *his* child, \* \* \* \* \*

‘He had roused the mere animal part of her nature—her soul was lost in the delirium of the gross and earthy senses—she became the partner of his appetite, and the Mother of his Child.

‘And, for *him* I stained my hands with my Father’s blood, and stamped upon my deathless forehead, the hand of Cain !

‘Do you begin to read the destiny of your Race, Paul of Ardenheim ! This woman whom I had destined to become the mother of a pure and glorious Child, became the Mother of a Child, which as it kindled into life in her breast was impressed in every fibre of its existence, with the terrible necessity of Parricide. The Mother was conscious that my hand had slain my father, and this consciousness was instilled into her Child before it saw the light. This consciousness was the seed of a rich harvest of unnatural crimes.

‘The Child was sleeping on her bosom as I raised the steel, which deprived her of life. There it slept with its father’s baseness, the latent impulse of Parricide, and some portion of its Mother’s better nature, written upon its stainless face. She died, but the Child I could not kill, for even then a hope burned in my soul, that the life which beat in its veins was derived from mine.

‘I resolved to permit it to live, so that its very life might prove its lineage.

‘It lived ; it grew to manhood ; it struggled awhile with temptation, soared awhile above the dust, and then sank with open arms into the embrace of pollution. That child was at last a hoary old man, tottering to the grave under the triple burden of age, disease and lust. And, even the little space of life permitted to the aged sinner, was coveted by his son. The Son slew his Father—then the lineage of Eola’s Child was no longer a doubt, no more a mystery to me.

‘From that Child, Paul of Ardenheim, your race have descended. In vain have the Lords of your Race attempted to escape the curse which rested upon the birth of that child—and, as for you—the purity of Eola’s better nature may shed a halo around you for a little while, but the baseness of my brother’s blood, and the dark necessity of Parricide will work their inevitable results at last, and like every one of your race, you, Paul of Ardenheim, will sink into the grave of the Sensualist, with your brow seared by the mark of Cain, your hand red with the dye of Parricide.’

Thus far, in a voice unbroken by a single tremor, had Paul Ardenheim repeated the words of the singular Being, whom he had encountered in the Sealed Chamber. As he went on, his form immovable as an image of stone, his eye shining steadily from his corpse-like face, his voice hollow and deep, but undisturbed by one pause, or sign of hesitation, it seemed to the beautiful woman that she beheld Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre himself, that she heard his own sad accents, repeating the details of his incredible history, while Paul Ardenheim passed entirely from her sight.

But now he paused, he hesitated, overwhelmed by emotion he was unable to proceed, and Paul Ardenheim once more stood before her.

"The full history of that hour I dare not repeat; it would strike me dead, but to tell it to human ears," he resumed, in a faint and gasping voice; "He revealed to me, the page of the Future, and showed me the gray hairs of my father, dabbled in blood. He, Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre, depicted the utter folly of any attempt on my part to evade Fate, and battle with Destiny, and yet—and yet—

*"And yet there is a Hope born of a Better World, and that Hope is yours!"*

"These words fell from his lips the moment before he disappeared. Yes, in the very bitterness of his mockery, he pointed me to Heaven after he had surrounded me with the atmosphere of Hell.—Beautiful woman! Do you now comprehend my destiny?" Paul grasped her hand; his pale cheek was tinged by a faint glow. "Do you now understand the source of the Voice, which spoke to you, and bade you urge me to my Despair? It was the spirit of this Demon which filled your breast, and gave words to your tongue. Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre found an instrument for his purposes in you—your eyes, your tones, the very pressure of this hand translated his infernal design into the semblance of virtue and courage, and with a broken vow upon my soul, I crossed the fatal threshold, and flung my soul into his Power. Had I not covered myself with perjury he could have had no power to move me. But as it was, I had already proved his words, and decided my destiny before I saw his corpse-like Face. It was the perjury that wrecked my soul. And, now what canst thou give me in recompense for the guilt of that Broken vow? 'Thou art very beautiful—yes, thou art like Eola! *'Never did the eye of the Sensualist rest upon a more voluptuous shape—never did the gaze of the Devotee linger upon a face more hallowed by calm and spiritual beauty.'* And yet, were the Universe thine to bestow, thou couldst repay me for the guilt of that Broken vow!"

And as the words fell from his lips, the music from without came in merry peals through the curtained window, filling the chamber with its bounding echoes.

The Wizard's daughter smiled, and quietly surrendered her hand to the



nervous grasp of Paul Ardenheim. 'The ivory line gleamed through her parted lips ; her eyes were full of latent mirth.

"Did it never occur to you, Paul, that the woman who loves you, was no real form of flesh and blood, but a misty creation of the Demon's skill? A spirit sent by Ranulph to win you to despair? A beautiful Demon placed in your path, by Ranulph's power, and armed with the fascination that bewilders only to destroy?"

She spoke laughingly, but Paul's forehead grew dark at her words.

He dropped her hands, and retreated from her gaze, while his eyes were chained to her face.

"Eola!" he muttered, with a vacant eye.

"Let me frame another supposition," she spoke again, but her face was sad, her voice deep and thrilling: "You are surrounded by the arts of a Demon, who has lived three hundred years, and who cannot die until he has plunged you into a vortex of unnatural crimes. Tell this to the people of the every-day world, and they will laugh at you for a madman. I will believe it; yes, I will receive the Revelations of the Sealed Chamber as common-place truth. But where will you find this demon? In the form of the Woman who loves you, or in the shrunken figure of that Old Man, who has stolen you away from the halls of your fathers,—buried you in the shades of Wissahikon—surrounded you with incredible temptations—poisoned your very blood with suspicion and madness?"

Paul gazed upon her in blank amazement—

"Of whom do you speak?" he cried.

"Do you not guess my meaning? Of the aged man, whom you call, Father!" she whispered and clasped his hand. There was persuasion in her tone, a calm, deep conviction in her eyes.

"My father!" Paul drew his hand from her grasp, and his face was stamped with unmingled horror. "Beware!" he whispered—"You blaspheme the Dead."

"Ah, he is dead, then? He has *disappeared*—" her lip curled, and her eye flashed with the very laughter of scorn: "*Disappeared!* First, your Sister dies; sacrificed to his relentless vengeance, and then he—*disappears!* And, Paul Ardenheim, who was driven forth from Wissahikon, like a felon two years and more ago, comes back again to weep by his Sister's grave, and mourn forsooth at the disappearance of the Demon who had deprived him of rank and power—of race and Name—and planted in his heart the fear of Parricide. Man! You are unworthy of your Destiny, for you have yielded yourself a willing victim to the very Demon whom you abhor, and—it is enough to bring a smile to a cheek of marble—you have called this Demon by the name of—'FATHER!'"

"Woman! You blaspheme the dead!" cried Paul in a voice hoarse with agony, and yet her words penetrated his soul, and overwhelmed with a Conviction which he could neither banish nor confute.

"I will not, I dare not think it!" he cried, wringing his hands in very frenzy, as a flood of memories, swept over him, bewildering every faculty, with their confused voices: "My father and Ranulph of Mount Sepulchre the same? No—no—by the salvation of my immortal soul—no! It is false, it is blasphemous——"

His voice rising with all the emphasis of despair, mingled with the melody, which burst gay and thrilling through the curtained window.

He buried his face in his hands for a moment, and then started toward the mirror with outstretched arms and distorted features:

"Away!" he gasped—"Thou art the Demon. Thy voice whispered ruin. Thine eyes looked Death into my soul. Thy very presence breathes Evil—Remorse—Despair! My father is dead; my sister sleeps the untroubled slumber of the grave, and I am left alone upon the earth, but left to work out a solemn duty, which permits no communion with the passions or hatreds of mankind. Away—I hate thee!"

His hands grasped the mirror, as he sought madly for the secret spring, while his face was turned over his shoulder.

"Hate thee! Dost read it in my eyes? 'Twas a Woman base and beautiful as thee, who wrecked the life of Ranulph, and bartered his eternal despair, for the brutal appetite of his Brother! Away! Thou art Eola!"

And he sought for the secret spring with trembling hands.

The beautiful woman, glided calmly to his side. She did not reply to his reproaches, nor return him scorn for scorn. Her eyes were downcast; her face and bosom hidden in the folds of her luxuriant hair.

"You will leave me, Paul," she whispered, extending her hands—"Behold! The door is open. Your way is free. And yet—" there was a tremor in her voice—"I would not part in anger."

Her hand had touched his own, as it sought for the secret spring. She was by his side; the hair which shadowed her face, waved against his breast, swayed by the breeze which came through the opened door, and gave him a glimpse of her faultless throat, and one white gleam of her panting bosom. He could not see her face; it was lost in shadow. But a tear glittered upon that gleam of the snowy breast, and he heard her voice die away in an inarticulate murmur.

Paul began to tremble; he was ice and flame by turns; his foot was on the threshold, yet he lingered one moment, ere he left her Presence and went forth into the silence and shadow of Night.

## CHAPTER FORTY-SECOND.

“TO NIGHT I AM TO BE MARRIED, PAUL.”

ONE moment! It passes ere the pen can write the letters, and yet ages of Thought may come and go, within its compass.

One moment!

It may be, only the last pebble which tops the pyramid, or the pivot on which a world spins round.

“Go forth,” she faltered, “But not in anger.”

She touched his hand, and clasped his fingers with an almost imperceptible pressure.

Paul’s face was no longer wild and distorted; it was subdued by a vague melancholy, but his heart beat tumultuously, and he was forced to lean for support against the frame of the secret door.

A breathless pause ensued, while she stood near him, her face in shadow, while her hand gently touched his own.

The door was free. Beyond was the darkness and silence of night; here Paradise, made beautiful by Eve.

Paul lingered—

Where was the anger, which had swelled his heart, and quivered in burning accents from his tongue?

She raised her face, and looked at him silently through the intervals of her dark hair; her lips moved as if in the effort to speak, but without a sound; and then she stretched forth her arms, and sank upon his breast.

“To night,” she murmured, as she buried her face upon his bosom. “To-night I am to be married Paul.”

Her breast was throbbing against his heart; her arms were round his neck, her hair waved over his arms and shoulders. It was as though liquid fire had been poured into his veins. He gathered her form to his breast with one arm, and closed the secret door with the other. The mirror in its place once more, reflected her head pillowed on his breast; his face, glowing with the fire and quivering with the tumult of a sudden rapture.

“Married!” he echoed, and—looking over her shoulder, he saw the white couch, among its snowy curtains, and knew at once that he beheld the Bridal Bed.

He was lost in a tumult of conflicting emotions; he was mad with boundless joy.

“Thou wilt be my wife!” he gasped, “Thou so young and beautiful, wilt take the nameless wanderer to thy arms!”



The dim luxurious light of that silent chamber, the pictures glowing from the walls, the statues gleaming from each shadowy recess, the music bursting in merry peals, through the window, the Bridal Bed, enshrined in twilight, all these conspired to inflame his senses, but the Woman who clung to his neck, and suffered her bosom to beat against his breast, completed his delirium.

"My wife!" he cried, "For me these marriage guests, for me these peals of marriage music, for me this silent room, made sacred by the Marriage Bed! It is too much—my brain is mad. For me the wanderer without a name, the outcast without one rood of land, with no heritage but Poverty and Despair."

And then the Thought came over his soul, that this beautiful woman had discovered his real Name; had found the clue to the title and the wealth of his race, and planned this scene as a merry surprise, for him—her Husband.

"Speak! Tell me the secret of this mystery with thy lips ripe with passion. Tell it to me with thine eyes. Nay be silent. Do not speak, or I shall grow mad indeed. Thy heart beating against mine own, speaks a language which needs no words to be understood."

She gently unwound her arms from his neck, and removed his hand from her waist, and stood before him, radiant, glowing—with all her loveliness about her like a veil

"I love you Paul," she whispered—in a measured voice, with a pause between each word—and took his hand: "Never can I love any one but you. We will love each other until we are dead. In all the world, there is no man, whose destiny is linked with mine, but you. We will climb the heights of fame and power together. I will be near you, when darkness clouds your soul. I will cheer you in the moment of Despair. When there is no resting-place for you, in all the world, my bosom shall pillow your head. But Paul, I am to be married to-night, but not to you."

It seemed to him, that he was cursed with sudden blindness. The room, the lights, the Marriage Bed, and the voluptuous form, all were lost in thick darkness. His brain swam; he heard sounds like the ringing of death bells in his ears; he was at once blind, mad and dumb.

"I am to be married to-night, but not to you!"

These words he heard; they sounded again, and again; they mingled with the tolling of the death-bells.

There was a long pause, ere he saw clearly again, and found himself still in the room, the Marriage Bed before him, and the beautiful woman by his side.

"Pity me!" he faltered—"I am in a dream. Soon I will awake, and find myself beside the Wissahikon, with the moonlight on my face. Yet it is a fearful dream. If I do not soon awake I will die."

Rising to her full stature, she swept her dark hair aside, and revealed her face,—unutterably beautiful—but calm and pale as Death.

“It is no dream, Paul. It is real, terribly real. To-night I am to be married. Married to Wealth, joined in solemn vows, uttered in the presence of Heaven, to Gold. The history is intricate and long, but I will speak it Paul, in few words. A Rich man has my father in his power; all this wealth which you behold, is hollow and fantastic as the gold of the Arabian legend; it shines brightly, but turns to withered leaves, before your eyes. This mansion, adorned with all the externals of wealth, these lands by the Wissahikon, nay the very liberty of my father, are shut up in the Rich Man’s coffers,—coffined and frozen in the charnel house of ‘Law.’ My body, Paul, is to be sold to-night, in the solemn auction of Marriage; sold by the Priest, to pay the debt of my father, and secure his gray hairs from the ignominy of the jail. The Rich Man, the creditor of my father will purchase me,—yes, buy my body—but the Soul, Paul, the Soul! That at least cannot be bought; it is free, as air or Death!”

Paul did not answer. As the first man in Eden, suddenly awoke from his dream of innocence, and found himself naked and was ashamed, so Paul Ardenheim, started up from his wild dreams, and found himself—**POOR.**

**POOR!** The Woman whom he worshipped—for whom he would have bartered his Soul—was to be sold, into the arms of sanctified lust, for the price of some thousands of round and bright and beautiful doubloons. Could he save her! Could he redeem her body from this unholy traffic? He could not call one piece of gold his own. He was **Poor.**

The agonies of the damned, are sometimes written in those three syllables—“**I AM POOR.**”

“Come,” he muttered, as the room swam round him, and the death-bells sounded in his ears—“We will leave this place. Some cabin by a hill-side, will give us shelter. Our souls are rich, what need we care for the Gold that pampers the body and damns the Soul?”

His eye was vague and wandering; his accents broken and faint; he spoke like a man half roused from some horrible dream.

“Love in a cottage!” she whispered, while her face was radiant with that laughter of scorn, which gave a Satanic lustre to its beauty. “No, Paul. We are not mad enough for that. Wouldst like to gaze upon the face of a Child, and feel that thou hadst given it being, with the curse of Poverty upon its brow? The Leper of old, had no right to love or marry; the Leprosy which poisoned his blood, he might bear in the silence of despair; it was a sin darker than Parricide, to communicate that Plague to the veins of a Child. Which is most fearful Paul, the Leprosy which corrodes the blood, or the Poverty which transforms body and soul, into one hideous ulcer?”

Paul was still silent, but the blindness had passed away ; his eyes shone clear and deep again ; his Soul was possessed by a fixed and irrevocable Resolve

“ To night I am to be married, Paul. Hark ! How the marriage music peals through the window ! The Priest will say his Prayer, or rather, repeat the words which make the sale complete. The guests will throng around the Bride, and while the Rich Man, contemplates his Purchase, they will prepare Her, for the consecrated orgies of the Marriage Couch. This is all fair ; is it not ? Legal, too, aye and Religious ? When a Man buys a thing, and gives his gold for it, he has a right to use it as he pleases—has he not ? But hold—” she grasped his hand, and looked into his eyes : “ Suppose the thing that is sold, has a Soul—a Will. Suppose the Woman bought with Gold, meets her Buyer on the threshold of the Bridal Chamber, and taught by his own ‘ Golden Rule,’ whispers in his ear— ‘ You have purchased the body, Husband by law, but Another has married the Soul. Soul and body, are not to be separated : I am fearful, Husband by law, that you cannot enjoy the one, without the possession of the other. You have bought the body with your gold ; Husband by law, that gold is now your Curse. For with that gold, I will raise the Husband of my soul, to rank and power ; aye with your gold, I will unloose the prison bars of Poverty, and let Genius spread its wings, and seek the Sun. Do not murmur, Husband by Law ; before the world, I will be, your Wife. I will submit to be surveyed, by the noble and the rich, as your Purchase. But the threshold of this chamber, you may never pass ; while there is a throb in my veins, or a Soul in my bosom you shall never mount that Bridal Bed—Husband by law ! ’ ”

“ He will be base enough, to hear this, and obey ? ” murmured Paul, while his Resolve gave a terrible light to his eye, an unnatural glow to his cheek.

“ The man who buys a woman with his gold, and is content, with love that is only purchased, is base enough, cowardly enough, for anything. And then Paul, do I look like a Woman, who will be foiled by a creature, like this ? When I look into your eyes, Paul, I feel that you are the Master of my Soul. And shall I, armed with this consciousness, falter and turn pale, at the cunning or the gold of the Husband by Law ? ”

Paul did not answer her in words, but his gaze, spoke the purpose of his soul. She was before him, in all her transcendent loveliness, a bold and fearless soul embodied in a voluptuous shape. His bronzed cheek was growing with a crimson flush ; his eyes deep and clear and yet flashing as with liquid light, devoured at a glance the witchcraft of her face, the warm palpable beauty of her virgin form. He extended his arms,—he drew her to his breast. And girdled in that arm, with all her life, throbbing in her bosom, and throbbing against his breast, she felt his touch, as



his hand gently parted her tresses, over her forehead, she felt his gaze,—burning, passionate, mad—as his lips clung to her own.

And their broken sighs—the low murmur of their love, half-drowned by their mingling lips were lost in the Marriage Music, which still pealed gaily through the curtained window.

And the mirror reflected their forms,—her robes like the driven snow floating about his dark attire—and their faces, both impassioned by the same glow, her eyes kindling with the fire of his gaze, her hair, streaming over the arm, which held her to his breast.

“Thou art mine,” he gasped, “And *now*. Behold our Bridal Bed.”

And ere the words had died on his tongue, ere the kiss which answered him, had sealed her full assent upon his lips, the mirror glided silently aside, and two forms entered the apartment, with noiseless footsteps.

Reginald of Lyndulfe, gay and magnificent in his wedding attire, with the pale face of Rolof Sener, smiling coldly over his shoulder.

“LEOLA!” cried the voice of Reginald.

“Save me! Reginald save me!” cried the beautiful woman, springing from the arms of Paul—“Save me from this villian!”

And Paul turned and saw her clinging to the neck of Reginald, her face, stamped with terror—aye with hatred—turned toward him, while the pale visage of Rolof Sener, smiled coldly at his side.

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## CHAPTER FORTY-THIRD.

### LEOLA, PAUL AND REGINALD.

“SAVE me from this villian! He entered my chamber, by that secret door, he assailed with threats, aye with violence! He assailed my life and more than life—my honor!”

And the Wizard’s Daughter clung, frightened and pale to the neck of Reginald.

Paul was dumb.

“It is not Paul Ardenheim that I behold. It is some miserable coward, who bearing some resemblance to the noble Paul, has stolen his dress and name. It is not—it cannot be Paul Ardenheim.”

Reginald’s cheek was flushed, his blue eyes flashing with concentrated rage, but his tone was calm and measured, in its very mockery of doubt.

And as he spoke he took the hands which encircled his neck, and pressed them gently, at the same time, gathering all the sweetness of her voluptuous mouth, in a long and passionate kiss.

Paul was dumb.

Rolof Sener, who stood near the mirror, with folded arms, surveyed the three, with his cold and passionless smile. Here the beautiful woman, clinging to the neck of Reginald, arrayed in his wedding dress; there Paul Ardenheim, standing alone, his arms hanging by his side, his face colorless and leaden as the visage of death.

"Had I been a moment later——By Heaven, it makes my blood boil to think of it!" and Reginald gazed fondly—tenderly—in the face of the Wizard's daughter. "Only a moment later, and I should have entered this room, to find you my Leola, dishonored and a corpse."

Again he clasped her hands, and pressed a kiss upon her lips.

Paul was dumb.

Rolof Sener's sunken eyes began to flash with peculiar light, and the icy smile played around his pale thin lips, but he did not speak.

"One moment, love," whispered Reginald, and he unwound the arms of the beautiful woman, "I will punish this villian, who has assumed the name and dress of Paul Ardenheim, and then Leola—" he gazed fondly into her eyes—"the guests are waiting for us in the room below, and every thing is prepared for our Marriage."

Paul's chest began to heave; the color rushed to his cheek, and a deadly light, glimmered from his bloodshot eyes.

"LEOLA!" he gasped, and with the utterance of that fatal name, all the mystery of this scene, was revealed to his soul. When the word had passed his lips he was pale and dumb again.

Reginald resigned the arm of Leola, and crossed the floor, until he stood face to face with Paul. Rolof Sener smiled as he remarked the contrast. The muscular yet graceful form of the Monk of Wissahikon, clad in the garb of a Heidelberg Student; a garb worn with travel, and bearing in every detail, the unmistakable indications of Poverty: the muscular and military figure of the Lord, attired in the costume of a wealthy gentleman, on the eve of marriage; a costume of silk and velvet, adorned with jewels, and eloquent of Gold. Reginald's chesnut hair, touched by the hand of his *valet*, and carefully dressed after the fashion of the time, relieved with its powdered locks, his clear *blonde* complexion; Paul's dark hair, flowed wildly aside from his bronze visage, and only made his cheek seem paler, his eyes more intensely bright.

This was the contrast which fixed the icy smile on Rolof Sener's lips.

"As regards brute strength, they seem fairly matched," he muttered, "Only Paul seems palsied in every nerve, while Reginald is stronger than ever, with settled rage."

Leola clasped her hands, and awaited the issue, without the power to stir from the spot where she stood.

Reginald stood face to face with Paul, and surveyed him from head to foot, with a glance of overwhelming scorn. Paul returned his gaze, with a vacant and apathetic stare. For a moment neither spoke; the color went and came on Paul's bronzed cheek; now he was panting and gasping as if for life, and now pale and immovable as the dead; while Reginald's cheek glowed into one scarlet flush, and his eyes shone with settled hate. At last he broke the stillness—

"Paul Ardenheim!" he whispered, hissing that name through his set teeth, as though it was in itself the bitterest scorn, that his rage could utter.

Paul did not answer—did not move—his eyes was fixed upon the floor.

"Speak! Speak Paul! Make but the lamest excuse; frame but the basest apology, and I will listen patiently. In a moment my servants will hurl you from this room and scourge you from the house. Speak! I am waiting—with patience—am I not? What means your presence in this chamber?"

Reginald bent forward as he spoke, until his breath inflamed by rage, fanned the very cheek of the Monk of Wissahikon.

Paul stood motionless and dumb, with his eyes cast to the floor.

Rolof Sener smiled his icy smile, as he stood beside the mirror. As for Leola, with her finger pressed upon her bloodless lip, and her entire frame quivering like a tigress, about to dart upon its prey, she silently awaited the end of his tragedy.

"You are my friend, Paul," whispered Reginald, with scorn in his look and in every accent. "Do you remember our vow?"

Paul shuddered.

"*We will be true to each other, and in no extremity or danger desert each other, but cherish forever the solemn symbol of the Broken but not divided Coin—broken not divided for its separate pieces are moved by two hearts, joined in one by the holy tie of Brotherhood. Do you remember it, Brother Paul? Quite romantic—eh?*"

Paul raised his eyes, as if about to speak, and at the same moment Leola started one step forward, and her gaze encountered the eyes of the Monk of Wissahikon. That look was unperceived by Reginald. Paul felt it to the inmost core of his heart, and his pale face, glowed into life again. Rolof saw it and smiled. No words can describe it, for the whole being of Leola, was embodied in that single glance. It was passion, it was entreaty, it was madness. It said, to Paul, '*Spare me! And at the proper moment I will tell you all! Spare me! For I am thine!*'"

Paul therefore, although his heart beat madly against his breast, was silent as the dead.

"You still wear the Broken Coin about your heart?" cried Reginald



surprise and rage, struggling for the mastery on his face: "And with that Coin upon your heart, you stole coward-like into this chamber, and attempted the dishonor of my Wife."

"Your wife!" ejaculated Paul, and then—again that look from the flashing eyes of Leola.

"My betrothed," answered Reginald, "In a few moments—after my servants have scourged you from the mansion, mark ye—she will be my wife."

Reginald placed his hand within the ruffled lace, which fluttered between his silken waistcoat and his breast, and in an instant, drew forth his half of the Broken Coin. He cast it at the feet of Paul, exclaiming, "Take it up, my Brother! It will serve to remind you of our vow."

Paul trembled from head to foot, he started forward as if his agony had at last unsealed his lips, but looking over the shoulder of Reginald he again encountered Leola's gaze. He was dumb once more. He knelt in silence, took the Broken Coin, and placed it within his garment, close to his heart.

The moment rapidly drew near, when Reginald's rage at first settled into a tone of biting sarcasm, was to burst all bonds, and vent itself in loud reproaches, perchance, in dishonorable blows.

"Thou paltry knave!" he cried, "Did I not feed thee of my bread, and give thee to drink of my cup? Thou to meditate an act like this? Beggar! Did I not share my purse with thee, and clothe thy coward's form, with the very garment, which it now wears?"

The cup of Paul's agony at last was full. Scorned for his treachery, insulted for his cowardice, and now, tainted with his—Poverty.

"*I am poor!*" he muttered wildly, and fixed his blood-shot eyes on Reginald's face, his arms quivering to the very fingers as with a spasm. Was he about to grapple with the young Lord, and trample him beneath his feet?

Rolof Sener smiled.

Leola crossed the floor with noiseless steps, and stole gently behind Reginald, winding her arms around his neck as she whispered in his ear, *but at the same time, gazing steadily into the very eyes of Paul Ardenheim.*

"Do not be angry with the poor knave, Reginald," she whispered—"Do not so far forget yourself as to strike him. This gentleman who stands near us, and whom I have seen to-day before, will doubtless charge himself with the care of the poor wretch. Will you not, good Rolof? Thrust him forth by the secret stairway, and our guests will not be disturbed by the scandal of his presence. For my sake, Reginald!"

And her look which flashed into Paul's very soul, spoke to him, as her voice spoke to Reginald:

"*Spare me! I am thine! When the time comes, I will tell you all!*"

"Away Leola!" cried Reginald, thrusting her gently from his side: "This knave shall answer to me, and without delay. Speak, coward! If within your craven form, there yet lingers one throb of manhood, speak and answer me! Have you no word to excuse this outrage?"

Paul raised his form to its full stature, and surveyed Reginald with steady look, at the same time wiping the cold sweat from his forehead. But he did not speak. There was a spell upon his tongue, upon his blood, upon his Soul. It was the Soul of Leola flashing from her eyes.

Rolof Sener advanced; spoke a few brief words; extended his hands, and then retreated to his former position near the mirror. It was but the work of an instant, and yet his extended hands, placed a sword in the hands of Reginald and Paul, and the words which he had spoken were full of meaning.

"Do not forget that you are gentlemen. There are two swords. The peal of the Marriage Music will drown their clashing. Leave scolding to women. The outrage was attempted in this chamber, and here it must be atoned for."

Reginald surveyed his sword, with an exclamation of joy, as wild as incoherent. Paul felt the hilt in his grasp, saw the sharp blade glitter in the light, and with an involuntary glance, measured the form of his antagonist.

"Defend yourself!" cried Reginald, glowing at once with the consciousness of muscular power, and with the fury of revenge: "Come! This matter can be settled in a moment!"

Had Rolof Sener been a Demon, he could not have looked more coldly calm, or more serenely delighted than at the present moment.

As for Leola, like some beautiful Statue of Terror, she stood rooted to the floor, her hands hanging stiffly by her side, while her eyes flashed vividly in her death-like countenance.

Paul grasped the sword, and his blood-shot eye brightened with a ferocious instinct. He gazed upon the breast of Reginald, gay with marriage attire, and seemed to meditate the blow, which would crimson that marriage attire with the Bridegroom's blood. He had forgotten the solemn mission which forever separated him from the loves and hatreds of mankind; forgotten his dead Father, and the stern Prophecy uttered by the Living-Corpse in the silence of the Sealed Chamber; he was only conscious of the three-fold taunt of treachery, cowardice, and poverty. His blood bounded once more in his veins, as he felt that sword hilt in his grasp; the lust of bloodshed possessed him from head to foot. He measured his antagonist, and stood ready—to kill.

"Come—it is enough—" he cried, in a voice almost inaudible, while his discolored eyeballs gave an unnatural look to his visage—"Here, beside the Bridal Bed, thou shalt die."

And at the same instant, his sword fell from his nerveless hand, and

clattered at his feet. He caught the gaze of Leola,—that look unloosed his iron grasp—and trembling from head to foot, he stood gazing vacantly upon his fallen sword.

“Coward! Said I not so? He dare not confront his *Brother* Reginald.—Thus—thus—I inflict upon you, the last shame which might even stir a craven into manhood.”

And he struck Paul across the shoulder with his sword; not with the edge, as he would strike a man, but with the side of the blade as he would strike a dog.

Then the smile which had lingered about Rolof’s lips, mounted to his eyes, and radiated over his massive forehead.

Paul calmly folded his arms—calmly, although his chest was swelling with fearful agony—and looked Reginald in the eyes.

“Strike higher next time:” he quietly said, “Let the scar upon my forehead, direct your aim.”

The scene which then occurred defies all power of description. Even as Paul, raising himself to his full stature, placed his finger upon the scar, while a singular calmness overspread his face; even as he spoke of that scar, which had been received in the defence of his friend’s life, Reginald, blinded by his rage, raised the sword, and struck the defenceless man across the forehead. As before, he used not the edge, but the side of his sword. Still, the blow was violent, and the scar received for Reginald, bled afresh.

Paul, with the blood upon his forehead, staggered to and fro for a moment, then, conquered as much by his agony as by the blow, fell like a dead man to the floor.

His arms were outspread without life or motion, and his ashen face, with the features fixed as if in death, was half-concealed by his dark hair, which was damp and matted with his blood.

Reginald struck the blow, and before a moment passed, stood gazing upon the prostrate form, the sword still clenched in his right hand. Near him Leola, without the power to speak or move, her hands clasped, and her head bowed on her breast, while Rolof Sener, in front of the mirror, looked on the scene with his brilliant eyes and icy smile.

For a moment, something like regret struggled with the mad anger of Reginald’s face, as he surveyed that noble forehead, half-hidden by the dark hair drenched in blood.

But Rolof Sener, gliding over the floor with a soundless step, was at his side:

“Reginald, let us remove the body,” he whispered, in his softest tone.

Reginald felt an unknown fear creep through his veins; he cast his eyes to the floor, and trembled in every nerve. For the words of Rolof Sener told him, that he beheld not a living man,—stunned by a sudden blow—but a Corpse



"He is dead," whispered Rolof, "He died, not so much by your hand, as from the breaking of his proud heart. 'Twas a noble fellow, after all. And the scar—eh, Reginald? Received in your defence, when he saved your life? But come, we will remove the body, and to-morrow this matter may be duly explained to the wedding guests. There is no time to be lost—quick, Reginald!"

Reginald wondered to hear him speak thus in the presence of Leola. He turned to look upon her and mark the expression of her face, but Leola had fallen in a swoon. Without a sigh, like a flower broken on its stem, she had sunk insensible, her hair waving over her face as she fell.

"She will not awake until we return," whispered Rolof, "And we can tell her a merry story, how we scourged the 'Monk' from her father's grounds."

And without another word, they bore the body of Paul Ardenheim through the secret door and down the narrow stairway. We will not aver, that Reginald's hands did not tremble as he grasped the body of his dead 'Brother,' nor dare we assert that his heart did not grow cold as he felt the head of Paul upon his breast. But the moment before they went from the light into the dark stairway, Reginald, gazing upon the face of Rolof—illumined in every feature by that light, and thrown distinctly into view by the darkness of the stairway—felt something like a dim memory flit over his brain. It was a remarkable visage, you will remember, its thin lips stamped with that eternal smile, with its great forehead relieved by short gray hair,—a single lock falling down the centre—its eyes sunken deep, yet gleaming with dazzling lustre, and lighting up a visage whose colorless complexion reminded you of the waxen face of the dead.

"I have seen that face among the family portraits of our Race," the thought flashed over the mind of the young Lord—"And it looks like the face of Ranulph-John, who was found dead beside the dead body of my Grandsire."

And thus they took the body of Paul Ardenheim from the voluptuous light of Leola's chamber, into the silence and darkness of the summer night. The marriage music which smote their ears, fell cold and dead upon his pulseless brain. And the light, which came in fitful rays through the shrubbery which encircled the opening of the secret stairway, shone upon his marble visage and dark hair drenched with blood.

Meanwhile LEOLA, stretched insensible upon the floor of her Bridal Chamber, with her dark hair waving over her face, was all unconscious that the Rich Man, who had bought her with his Gold, had borne away the lifeless body of Paul, the Husband of her Soul.

It was not many moments ere Reginald again stood in the secret door, gazing upon the voluptuous images of Leola's chamber, ere his footstep crossed its threshold. His eye lingered for awhile upon the statues gleaming from each recess, upon the pictured walls, wrapt in luxurious

light, but rested last of all, upon the Bridal Bed, half-hidden in twilight gloom. Then all the pallor was gone from his face, and the smile of his red lip, the gleam of his deep blue eyes, the heaving of his broad chest, all told, that his thoughts had passed from the dead Paul to the living Leola.

"And ere an hour passes, she will be mine. The wedding guests are waiting, even now; and the good Clergyman, the Reverend Jacopo! stands impatient, book in hand, and eye cast toward the floor.

And the handsome Reginald smiled as he crossed the threshold, and looked around, impatient for Leola's bewitching glance.

Leola, however, had gone from the Bridal Chamber.

Reginald's face manifested something like disappointment, but sinking in a chair, with his back to the secret door, he surrendered himself to his thoughts.

"She has gone to array herself for the marriage ceremony," he thought, and a smile crossed his lips—"The most beautiful woman I ever beheld! A good friend, that Rolof, for, when my father storms and talks of an ill-assorted marriage, Rolof will quietly point to Jacopo, the *amateur* clergyman. And *he* lies dead, out yonder, in the darkness, with his bloody forehead against the damp grass. Twice he saved my life. Once on the Wissahikon, when the huntsman's knife was at my throat, and again in the streets of London. Dead, now! I have always had a lurking fear, although I never confessed it to myself, that the man would be dangerous to me some day or other. But now he is dead."

You must not imagine that thoughts like these found utterance in words, for even as they crowded upon him, in all their vivid hues, his lips spoke a far different language.

"Leola, the beautiful!" he said, aloud, "She will be mine, ere an hour passes, and we will be happy together, here on the Wissahikon. *He* is not dead—no by Heaven! Only a fainting fit; it was a hard blow, but it could not kill. But I must leave this place—ha, ha! It would not do for me to be summoned to the marriage, from the Bridal Chamber, and therefore, I will make my retreat by this passage. I can enter the hall door, and tell my good friends, that I have been taking a solitary stroll by moonlight. That will do. Pshaw! *He* is not dead!"

He rose, and turned toward the secret doorway. He made but a step forward, when a new wonder paralyzed his entire frame, and drove the hues of passion from his handsome cheek.

The frame of the doorway was occupied by a beautiful picture. Had the hand of Rolof Sener stretched the canvass there, and placed before him, this Picture which smote his heart, no less with its calm beauty than with its terrible memory? Or was it an Apparition from the shadows of the Other World.

It was the picture of a young woman, whose brown hair was gathered

in a dark and glossy mass, on either side of a serenely beautiful face. Eyes of deep and tranquil hazel lighted that face, and gave an expression pure and virgin, to the warm cheeks and ripe and dewy lips. The form was young, graceful, and yet swelling in every outline with the ripe loveliness of womanhood—but womanhood that has only a moment passed from maidenhood into perfect bloom.

It was a picture of Madeline.

“Madeline!” faltered Reginald, as the blood left his cheek, and gathered in tumultuous throbs about his heart.

And then the Picture moved from its frame, and came forward into the chamber, and spread forth its arms, from beneath the dark mantle which floated over its white robes, and fell upon Reginald’s neck with tears in its hazel eyes.

“It is Madeline! No ghost, but Madeline living, and more beautiful than ever!”

And he pressed his kiss upon her lips, even as she clung to his neck, and wept upon his bosom. It was not a Brother’s kiss. It was warm and passionate and clinging; the kiss of a Sensualist. Then he raised her face from his breast, and gazed long and ardently upon its beauty, bathed as it was, in tears, and held her form at arm’s length, and with a gaze as long and ardent, surveyed its ripe and womanly outlines. She was not so queenly as Leola. There was not the witchcraft in her eyes, that gave such overwhelming power to Leola’s glance. There was no wild ambition on her young brow, no daring Thought written upon the warm lineaments of her young face. She was but a Woman, with only a woman’s purity and a woman’s holiest instincts written upon her countenance, while Leola was a bold and fearless Spirit, embodied in a voluptuous form. And yet there was something in the very Innocence, something in the very Womanliness of Madeline, that roused the senses of the young Sensualist, and made his blood beat with a wilder throb, than ever stirred his breast when encompassed by Leola’s surpassing loveliness.

And she was not his Sister; she was only Madeline, the daughter of Catherine Conwell, the Poor Woman.

A thousand vague plans for the Future, already shone in Reginald’s sensual gaze, plans which rushed upon him in a flood—vague, misty and shapeless—yet all fraught with danger to the innocence of Madeline.

“My beautiful bird,” he cried gaily, “and have I found you again? Have you risen from the grave, have you dropped from the sky? Tell Madeline, my beautiful, where have you buried yourself so long?”

“Brother!” she answered, while something like fear pervaded her bosom as she felt his ardent gaze upon her face; and yet it was fear, overshadowed by the very Innocence of her virgin soul—“I received your letter only an hour ago. I am here to claim your promise. You



said the Past should be forgotten. Brother and that you would join my hands in marriage with my plighted Husband, Gilbert Morgan."

Reginald did not suffer the unmingled surprise which pervaded his being to appear in one lineament of his handsome face. He bowed his head,—thought deeply, intensely for a moment—and then drew her gently to him, and pressed his kiss once more upon her lip.

"So I did Sister," he murmured without raising his face, "and so I will, my pretty one. You shall be married to Gilbert. I vow it on my soul."

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## CHAPTER FORTY-FOURTH.

MADELINE, GILBERT AND ROLOF SENER.

AND at the same moment, the door of the chamber was opened, and a footstep echoed from the secret stairway. Reginald heard neither the echo of the step, nor the sound of the opening door.

But when he raised his head, he saw Leola standing by his side, her lips curling in scorn, her eyes flashing with wild light—Leola surpassingly beautiful in her Bridal Dress, with her dark hair crowned with pale lilies, and a diamond glittering on her proud forehead.

Leola was at his side, and before him stood Gilbert Morgan, his almost giant form attired in green and gold, trembling in every nerve, his sun-burnt face darkening with deadly anger, his hands clenched, and his brown hair falling in disordered masses over his corrugated brow.

Gilbert had entered by the secret door, as Leola came through the other door of her chamber.

"Go on," she cried laughingly, in a tone of withering scorn, "This drama amuses me. Go on, husband of mine. I would not disturb your love scene for the world."

And the future Duchess of Lyndulfe cast upon him a glance, which might have killed him, had glances the power to kill.

"And soh, my gay friend, we've met at last," said Gilbert, drawing a hunting knife from his belt: "I've waited a long time for this meetin'. But we have met, an' face to face too. There's no mistake this time. We can settle our long account at once, and without delay. Come!"

And in the face of his plighted wife, and with her scornful gaze upon him, and in the face of Gilbert, and with his uplifted knife flashing in the light, Reginald drew Madeline to his breast, and kissed her rosy lips once more.

Gilbert uttered a blasphemous oath; Leola bit her red lip until it was stained with blood.

"For this, Madeline," he cried, "for this I have defied the power of the Fiend, and resolved to shake off his infernal sorcery, and be a man agin! Ah, girl, your words and heart are alike—false—false as the Fiend himself!"

Leola did not speak, but her thoughts was full of agony—"For this, I have sacrificed Paul Ardenheim!"

Reginald's handsome face was convulsed with laughter.

"Leola! Behold my long lost sister!" he cried, and taking Madeline by the hand, urged her gently into the arms of his Betrothed.

"Ah! That face is stamped upon my soul. Yes, yes, I have seen you before!" and the proud damsel extended her arms to clasp the Orphan Girl to her heart.

But Madeline did not respond to her caresses, nor look into her eyes. For Madeline's warm cheek was warm and glowing no longer, and Madeline's bright eyes were obscured with a misty film. Trembling in every limb, she had suffered Reginald to press her lip, and lead her toward his Betrothed, but from the moment, when the voice of Gilbert broke on her ears, she had lost all consciousness of anything but his presence. And yet she had not seen him; she had not the power of will to turn and gaze upon him.

Even as the queenly woman pressed her hands, Madeline murmured faintly—"You saved my life on that fatal night!" but her thoughts were of Gilbert—every instant she expected to clasp his hand and be gathered to his heart.

"You are not well; this excitement has been too much for you, my sweet sister," exclaimed Leola.

And like a maiden walking in her sleep, Madeline turned and beheld Gilbert. Stood face to face with him—surveying not his glittering armor—so different from the rude huntsman's costume of other days, nor yet his sunburnt face, with brown curls about the brow, and a thick beard around the muscular throat—but looking into his eyes, as though she would grasp his very Soul.

Gilbert saw her look so wildly on him—trembled—and reached forth his arms. "Come, Madeline," he said, in a husky voice—"You're the only thing left to me on this earth, and you only can save me from the Fiend."

She did not glide to him, she did not dart into his arms, but she was there—upon his breast—her maidenly form, which looked slight and diminutive beside his giant frame, quivering in his convulsive grasp. And the tears of that strong man fell like rain upon her face, and in the very agony of his joy, he muttered incoherent ejaculations, which no one unfamiliar with his adventures, might comprehend.

"True! True! True by ——! True as light to-day, or an angel to its God. There aint no blemish in you, girl. Spotless as the driven snow. And you'll pray for me, and God will hear your prayer. Wont you Madeline?" He did not suffer her to answer him with words, but took his answer from her lips. How that kiss, the first that had pressed his mouth from Madeline's lips, since the fatal night thrilled poor Gilbert's soul! It was like a token of Peace—of Forgiveness.

"And I murdered you, Madeline; yes, stabbed you as if you'd been a savage beast, or a devil in human shape, like myself. Did n't I? Can you ever forgive?"

"Gilbert," she answered softly, pressing her hands upon his sunburnt face, as he held her to his breast, as you would hold a child: "The darkness has gone from us forever. It is morning with us now!"

Leola proud and beautiful, as she was in her bridal attire, could not restrain her tears. She suffered them to flow freely, and did not attempt to hide them, as they flashed over her glowing cheek.

Reginald with a moody brow, and lips pressed between his teeth, surveyed the scene in sullen silence, only muttering a deep curse or two, with some gallant ejaculation, such as this: "He carries it bravely! The peasant grub turned butterfly, as I live! Zounds! He'll strangle her with his clownish kisses!"

"And as you intend to marry the Lady Madeline, sister of my Lord Reginald, may I, as an humble friend of the family, presume so far as to request the favor of your name?"

It was a very mild voice, low and gentle, and yet it thrilled Leola and Reginald with the same shudder; forced a shriek, half joy, half fear from Madeline's lips, and as for Gilbert, it seemed to transform into a statue; a sort of quaint effigy of the giant Sampson, with a face of marble, and costume of velvet glittering with gold.

It was the voice of Rolof Sener.

He had glided unperceived from the secret door, and now he stood between Gilbert and Reginald, his pale face slightly drooped upon his breast, as he gazed—with upturned eyes—into Gilbert's visage. There was something at once grotesque and sublime in the horror manifested by Gilbert, at the sight of Rolof Sener.

"The Fiend himself!" he gasped, "save me from him, Madeline—save me, or I'm lost. He put his Soul upon me an hour ago, when I was in your room, at the Haunted House, away yonder at Germantown, and I was forced to obey him—and walk where he wished—and do as he willed me—but I've resolved to break his power. To break his power, I say, and cast off his spells, and be my own man agin. You can help me, Madeline—you only! Back! Back! I say! You dare not touch me while this pure girl is on my breast!"



"Why this is my father, good Rolof Sener," cried Madeline, amazed at Gilbert's horror.

"You see, my children, I have not moved an inch, and yet he bids me back! and shrinks away from me, as if I meant to strike him. I indeed! when a blow from his arm would crush me to powder."

Rolof with his arms folded, and his head drooped on his breast, gazed around with upturned eyes, while a sad sweet smile hung on his thin lips.

Leola shuddered; why, she could not tell: "His face does not seem to me, like the Rolof Sener, who talked with me to-day!" the thought darted over her mind.

"Ranulph John!" muttered Reginald, as a singular memory agitated his brain.

"You wish to marry this lady," continued Rolof, who now kept his gaze fixed immovably upon Gilbert's horror-stricken face—"You are gaily dressed. This is well. Unless indeed, your beautiful plumage covers a vulture's heart. But we wish to know your name?"

"Back! Back! Your eyes from my face I say, your curse from my soul!" shrieked Gilbert, and in his despair he clutched poor Madeline with an embrace like Death itself; "You're spinnin' your infernal web around me—I know it, I know it. An' I must come into your clutches at last, but while this girl is near my heart, I defy you."

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when his arms were outstretched, with a stiff, mechanical movement; his features became rigid and motionless; his eyes, fixed in their sockets, shone with a dull leaden lustre.

"It is not Gilbert!" shrieked Madeline—"It is a Corpse!" and half-swooning she sank into the extended arms of Reginald.

"Now my Lord, and you fair lady, with your permission I will question the cunning knave, who thinks to hide his criminal life, and cowardly designs, under the cloak of madness. Have the goodness to remain perfectly still while I question him. And you, my own Madeline, let not your heart throb against your bosom, like a bird against the bars of its cage. The *real* Gilbert, may come back some day."

"The real Gilbert?" cried Madeline, "This is Gilbert Morgan,—at least—" she gazed into the corpse-like face and hesitated—"At least I thought it was a moment ago."

It is not to be denied that Leola and Reginald awaited the issue of this scene with a breathless interest. And as they stood, perfectly silent and motionless, their eyes alternating between the remarkable visage of Rolof and the face of Gilbert, who looked in truth, like a frozen man, placed on his feet, by some strange fancy, the merry sound of the Marriage Music, still burst in one bounding peal, through the window of the Bridal Chamber.

"Answer me," said Rolof Sener, never for an instant removing his gaze from Gilbert's face, "Where was you, this night one year?"

A horrible smile distorted Gilbert's lips, while the other part of his face remained fixed as Death.

"On board the brave Ship Avenger, with as tight a crew as ever trod a pirate's deck. Ha, ha—" it was not a burst of laughter, which came from his lips, but rather a series of spasmodic groans—"How we boarded the East Indiaman, at set of sun, and raked her decks, and drove her crew into the hold, and then———why then, the moon came up, and saw five hundred of them walk the plank, and struggle their last, among the waves as red as blood."

"You hear?" whispered Rolof, turning to Madeline—this is your lover.

Madeline was silent, but Leola muttered—"If he was brave, and only made war upon the strong, I could love him in spite of all."

Rolof again turned to Gilbert, whose face still retained its corpse-like immovability. "You were the Captain of the Ship? answer me truly; I know your life, and can punish falsehood with a halter."

"The Captain—ha, ha!" again that burst of unearthly laughter—"You should have asked my men, as they gathered about me after the fight, who was Captain of our Avenger! We had wine from the stores of the East Indiaman, and women, too,—aye, we saved the best of the lot, and made a night o' t together. We did. I and my jolly crew."

"You are listening my child?" and again Rolof with his sweet smile turned to Madeline.

"It is only a frightful dream!" she faltered and gathered her hands, across her breast with a clash like iron. "And yet in spite of all, it is Gilbert, and he is my plighted husband."

Leola reached forth her hand, and pressed the cold hand of the Orphan Girl, while a tear glittered in her proud eye.

Meanwhile Reginald's face, manifested the extremes of surprise and horror. "The wretch!" he muttered and retreated a step from Gilbert: "He would have stolen my sister, and made her the toy of his brutal orgies!" Fraternal Reginald!

"Listen once again, Madeline, my child. Tell me, Sir Pirate, did you ever encounter a rude landsman in your travels, named Gilbert Morgan? You lately assumed his name; but his rugged honesty would put your shallow knavery to the blush."

"I did. In the West Indies, I saw him two years ago; he often spoke of the Wissahikon. By——it was the last word on his lips!"

"The last word?" cried Madeline, starting from the arms of Reginald. "He is dead, then, but no—no! It is a mockery. You are here, Gilbert. My heart tells me, it is you. Wherefore these idle words? Speak to me Gilbert! What means this scene?"

But the Man whom she addressed did not answer her with a word—not even with a look. His leaden gaze was still centered on the visage of Rolof Sener. To Rolof, Madeline turned and laid her head upon his folded arms, looking into his face, with all her soul, in the intensity of her gaze: “This is not kind of you, my Father! It is unworthy of your generous nature!”

Yet Rolof without pausing to answer her, continued his questions: “You saw the last of Gilbert Morgan?”

“He died in my arms, scarcely two years ago, of the yellow fever too, raving to the last about Wissahikon and Madeline,” was the answer.

The Orphan Girl sank back as if a bullet had penetrated her bosom; she buried her pale face upon the breast of Leola, who whispered—“Courage, my Sister! It is not so dark as it appears.”

“You bear a great personal resemblance to Gilbert Morgan?” Madeline awaited the answer to this question with quivering suspense.

“I do. Not a doubt of it, by Jove! My comrades often laughed about it, while he lived, and when he was dead, I resolved that I’d turn it to advantage, if I ever came to Philadelphia.”

Madeline buried her face again; the last hope had gone out.

“How?” asked Rolof Sener.

And the Man with the motionless form and corpse-like visage, uttered a burst of hollow laughter as he replied: “Gilbert had spoken of the pretty lass named Madeline. Had told me, in fact, those dear little secrets of his love affairs, which are generally only known to two persons, to wit, the lover and the sweetheart. Says I,—that is after he died—if I even come to Philadelphia, I will seek out this Wissahikon, and make love to this Madeline—if she happens to be living—in the name of the dead Gilbert. So I planned it, and so I’ve tried to accomplish it, but you——”

“Villian! I have foiled your cunning and brought your knavery to the light,” interrupted Rolof, his eyes for the first time, flashing with rage. “Now depart! Once this day, have I warned you; I now repeat my warning! This time you depart unscathed. But remember! Should you ever appear upon the Wissahikon again or *dare again, to assume the name of poor GILBERT MORGAN*—remember! I will deliver you into the clutches of that Justice, whose very name, makes your face wear the look of death, and the heart within turn to ice. This time depart in Peace!”

And the man, clad in the green doublet embroidered with gold, turned his fixed eyeballs from the light, and with a measured, but mechanical stride, crossed the threshold of the secret stairway.

“Gilbert! Gilbert!” shrieked Madeline, darting forward with panting bosom and outspread arms, “Do not leave me! Do not leave me, Gilbert——” But he did not turn back, and cast one farewell look upon her



face. Without a look, without one accent of farewell, he crossed the threshold, and was gone.

"Let me arrest his flight," cried Reginald, starting from his stupor, which had bound his senses while these events transpired before his very eyes: "A wretch like this, is not fit to live!"

Rolof waved him back. "Would the Lord of Lyndulfe convert himself into a bailiff on his wedding night. I have unmasked the wretch. That is sufficient. Let him depart in peace."

"Unmasked, indeed," murmured Madeline, sadly, gazing upon the spot where the Pirate had lately stood: "But at the same time, good father, you have unmasked my grave. It was concealed by flowers, only a few moments since. I see it clearly now, and—my foot is on the brink."

Was it a tear that subdued the stern light of Rolof's gaze? Very sad it was, to see her standing there, the centre of the silent group, her pure and virgin loveliness frozen at its fountain, by the corpse-hand of despair.

"Come, Madeline, you need repose," said Rolof, kindly, as he took her by the hand: "This house must be your home, until you depart for England, with your Brother Reginald, and your sister, his Bride."

Even the thought of leaving Wissahikon, brought no glimpse of color to her cheek; she took his hand in silence, and with faint and uneven footsteps, moved with him toward the door.

"Reginald," he said, as he passed the young Lord, "I will join you again, before the marriage ceremony. *Jacopo waits below*," he added, in a whisper, "*and when Leola cloy's your appetite, the daughter of Catherine Conwell will lead on the drama of your loves.*" There was a strange significance in his look and smile, as he spoke these latter words.

Then passing onward, to where Leola stood, he addressed her in a paternal tone: "Arrayed for the bridal, my child? I thought you beautiful before, but now, it seems to me, you look like the Duchess of Lyndulfe, and yet—" he hissed the words in an emphatic whisper: "*Paul Ardenheim will yet be yours!*"

With Madeline clinging to his arm, he left the Bridal Chamber, while the Bride stood gazing on vacancy, her cheek flushed and her bosom heaving; and the Bridegroom, with his gaze fixed upon Madeline's retreating form, felt all the sensualism of his nature, mount to his eyes. The last words of Rolof Sener had thrilled like molten fire through their veins.

"Paul Ardenheim will yet be yours!" murmured Leola, as she laid her hand upon her voluptuous breast.

And Reginald, as he smoothed the snow-white cambric which fluttered over his breast, exclaimed to himself—"The daughter of Catherine Conwell and Leola! A delicious contrast, upon my soul!"

With thoughts like these stirring in their hearts, they took each other by the hand, and looked into each other's eyes. Never stood nobler pair before the marriage altar. Reginald magnificent in his young manhood,

his entire form presenting a perfect type of physical beauty ; his limbs at once graceful and muscular ; his *blonde* complexion lighted by eyes of dark blue, his forehead relieved by hair of chesnut brown. Leola, well-developed in every rounded limb, her bosom swelling with life, her clear brown complexion blooming into vermillion on the lips and cheeks, the intense blackness of her hair, encircled with pale lilies, only exceeded by the darkness of her eyes. 'The Soul of a sensualist embodied in a manly form—the Soul of a proud and ambitious Spirit embodied in the shape of a voluptuous Woman. There they were, hand in hand, eye gleaming in eye, looking into one another's faces, with all the frankness of an all-trusting Faith, and meanwhile, in their hearts was written, LUST and PRIDE.

"A beautiful animal !" he thought, as he pressed her hand.

"A convenient stepping stone for me and Paul !" she thought, as she looked into his eyes.

There is a lesson in this scene ; a lesson worth all the sermons ever preached in grand marble churches, to ears of lead and hearts of brass. Survey it with your own eyes ; paint it in your memory.

This luxurious chamber, so beautiful with the pictures that seem to breathe from the canvass, and marble images that look like human beings whose footsteps have only been arrested for a moment by a passing thought ; this luxurious chamber, whose very atmosphere seems hallowed by the sacred Marriage Bed, while its curtains move to and fro, to the impulse of a breeze that comes laden with Marriage Melody. Is it not a beautiful scene ?

And here, in the centre of the place, stand the Bridegroom and the Bride, looking into each other's eyes, with glances that seem to speak of Love, as pure as that which trembled from the gaze of Adam into the heart of spotless Eve, and——and after all, this Bridegroom and Bride are only a Rich Man and his Purchase.

The Marriage Bed—ah ! What words spoken from a book, what Priest ordained by a Bishop, what vows uttered in the sight of God and man, can render holy that Marriage Couch ?

"This night has beheld many dark and troubled scenes," whispered Leola, as her eyes wore a vague and dreamy light.

"But, Leola," whispered Reginald, as his passionate breath fanned her cheek, while his eye, gazing over her snowy shoulder, beheld the Marriage Bed—"But, Leola, after all it is our Marriage Night."

At this moment, what scenes are passing yonder, within the Block-House of Wissahikon ? And Paul Ardenheim—does he live ?

## CHAPTER THE LAST.

## THE END OF ALL.

WHEN Paul awoke again, the luxurious chamber had passed away. He found himself alone, in the silence and shadow of Night. His form was prostrate; his brow was pressed against the damp grass. He raised himself and looked around, and endeavored to collect his shattered senses. There was blood upon his forehead; a sharp pain smote his very brain. He was in the shrubbery, near the secret door. This much he knew. But how had he come hither? Why this mark of blood upon his brow? The form of the Wizard's Daughter, clinging to the neck of Reginald—was that only the remembrance of a dream?

And through the shrubbery which shut him in, came fitful and broken rays of festival light, and the murmur of music—music pealing within solid walls—came faintly to his ear.

"Where am I?" he muttered, and placed his hand against his bleeding brow. "Ah—it was all a dream. I knew that I would awake at last. Yet it seems to me, that I heard Reginald call her by the name of *LEOLA*. And that I saw her clinging to the neck of Reginald. A troubled dream—nothing more!"

A burst of music, mingled with the hum of merry voices, rushed upon his ear: and at the same moment, a form emerged from the shadows and drew near his side, and by a ray of broken light, he saw the pale visage of Rolof Sener. A memory smote the heart of Paul, that he had seen that Face before. But where?

"The Bride has gone to her chamber," said a voice, singular in its sweetness, "And now the young Husband goes to claim his Purchase. Do you hear the shouts of the marriage guests? *Leola* is young and beautiful—and married. Or is Sold the word? And the Rich Man who bought her—do you remember how an hour ago, he smote you on the forehead,—aye, smote the very scar you received in his cause? How he thrust you from the chamber, and flung you, bleeding and insensible, upon this sod? Reginald, your friend, did this—an hour ago—and now he goes to claim his Purchase. His footstep is on the threshold—*Leola* in the Bridal couch awaits him."

And Paul Ardenheim felt something pressed into his grasp by the speaker; he clutched it, and raised it until it met a fitful ray; it was a dagger, with a hilt of iron, and a long blade sharp and glittering.

"That door leads to her chamber," whispered Rolof Sener; and Paul Ardenheim, without a word, went through the narrow door into the darkness of the secret chamber, the iron-hilted dagger in his grasp.



As he disappeared, the withered frame of Isaac Van Behme—or *Sir Ralph Wyttonhurst*, as you will—crept from the bushes, and glided to Rolof Sener's side, and then sank trembling and prostrate at Rolof Sener's feet. His pallid face, seen by the wandering rays, was stamped with awe—his hands were clasped, as if in the act of worship—he gazed into the face of Rolof Sener, and murmured,—“Satan!”

“Have no fear,” said the sweet voice of Rolof Sener, “Paul Ardenheim is mine, and Paul Ardenheim is gone to bring the precious blood for which thou dost seek.”

Up the dark stairway, dagger in hand, went Paul Ardenheim, and pressed the spring of the secret door, but in vain. It did not move at his touch; the mirror was fastened in its place. Then Paul, in the darkness, laid his hand upon his bleeding brow, and thrust that hand within his garment, and felt the fragment of the Broken Coin. Then, as if every relenting pulse had turned to ice, he pressed his weight against the door; it yielded without a sound—and he crossed the threshold of Leola's chamber.

A solitary lamp was burning there, and its rays left the statues and the pictures in twilight shadow, while the Bridal Bed, its white curtains drawn together, gleamed distinctly on his sight—and from those snowy folds, the sound of murmuring voices met his ear. Leola in the arms of Reginald—Leola in the embrace of the Rich Man, who had bought her with his gold! Yes, her white robe appeared in the interval of the curtains; her form was dimly discernible through their folds; she was standing beside the bed, bending over it, and with an arm around her snowy neck.

Paul stood on the threshold—glanced around for an instant—crossed the chamber with noiseless steps, and over Leola's shoulder, struck his dagger into the breast of Reginald, even as he reclined upon the couch. And then Leola turned to look upon him, and Paul, tearing the curtains with his frenzied hands, rushed forward, eager to catch the last look of the dying man. It was too dim; he could not see; he heard Leola's half-uttered shriek, but the face and the visage of the Dying was lost in the shadow.

Then, suddenly a burst of warm radiance filled the place—Paul turned, and by the glad light which gushed through the doorway of the chamber, saw **LEOLA** and **REGINALD** encircled by the marriage guests. And at the same time, from the secret door appeared the face of Isaac Van Behme,—quivering with an infernal desire—while Rolof Sener calm and smiling, stepped into the room with folded arms.

Paul turned to the Bed once more, and saw the prostrate form, and knew the ashen face. It was His Father. But this Woman by the bed-side, whose golden hair waves aside from a face, serenely beautiful, with its eyes of clear, deep blue, lighted by an Angel's love? It is Catherine.

The sister by the bed gazing into his face, while the Father stricken by his hand, writhed his last agony !

She took him by the hand—his Sister—and pointed to the quivering features of the old man. “He dies, Paul—” she said—yes—he heard her voice and lived—“But not by your hand. Look ! ‘The knife is buried in the pillow. As you struck, I raised my hand, scarce knowing why, and turned aside the deadly aim. Away, Paul ; this is no time for explanations ; no time for thought. Away—let not your footsteps pause until you stand within our Home once more. ‘To the Block-House, Paul, and when you have rescued the Deliverer, and looked upon your true Destiny, then I, Catherine, your Sister, will tell you all.”

Paul heard her voice, and looked into her eyes, and drank the God-born Thought, which gave them light. For a moment he lingered to press his Sister’s hand to his lips,—even as a Catholic might the marble hand of a sculptured Mary, mother of the Lord—and then with an agitated countenance, but with eyes radiant with a holy Resolve, he turned away, and passed through the door, passed between the forms of Leola and Reginald—without a glance, without a word.

The rest of the events of that night—are they not written in the chronicles of Mount Sepulchre ? Some day we will again take up the Record, and from the mysterious cyphers translate the history of Paul : Leola ; Reginald : of Madeline and Gilbert, and of the dread Ranulph, whose corpse-like visage, Paul beheld in the shadows of the Sealed Chamber. But now, we linger only for a parting word—

As Paul crossed the threshold, Rolof Sener rushed to the Bed,—saw that the dagger was harmless—and then with a livid face approached Reginald, even as Leola, pale and beautiful, hung on his arm :

“Behold the Son of Gaspard-Michael !” he cried and pointed to the retreating form of Paul Ardenheim.

And Catherine kneeling by the bed, and pressing her Father’s death-chilled hands within her own, lifted up her eyes and voice to Heaven, and thanked the God of all life, that the Malice of Satan, his intricate plans and infernal cunning, all had been brought to nothing, conquered and crushed by the instinct of a Sister’s Love.

## EPILOGUE.

### A WORD TO THE READER.

THUS far have we progressed in our translation of the Ancient Manuscripts, which record in their peculiar Cypher, the history of Paul Ardenheim the Monk of Wissahikon. Much we have written, and yet at the present moment we have scarcely passed the threshold of that history. We have seen the fearful education of Paul Ardenheim's Soul; we have seen it writhing into shape, in scenes of temptation and despair. We have yet to look upon that Soul, in its matured vigor, embodied in deeds, at once generous and sublime. What pen shall dare attempt the portraiture of the *entire life* of Paul Ardenheim, and trace him step by step from the chamber of Leola to his grave? Step by step through the American Revolution, among scenes which written History has blazoned to the world, and among scenes which still slumber, dumb and unrecorded, in the charnels of the Past? What hand shall dare to lift the curtain, and reveal Paul Ardenheim gliding like a Ghost—like an embodied Fate—through the incredible horrors and gloomy triumphs of the French Revolution? For glancing over the untranslated volumes, which in their difficult Cypher, enshroud these Legends of a past age, we read the name of the Monk of Wissahikon, not only in connection with the history of Washington and the New World; but also on the red page, which tells of the Old World in travail for its freedom with Robespierre the Messiah of Blood, presiding over its glorious agonies. At the present moment, neither our time, nor the limits of this work permit us to translate the entire life of Paul Ardenheim; and array its various and mysterious incidents in the familiar garb of every-day speech. And yet, at this moment, when we are about to part after journeying together so long, it is in my heart, Reader, to speak a word to you. Let us talk together like two friends, who after traversing many a hill and valley—side by side, in storm and calm—attain the last hill-top, and linger for a moment, with their eyes fixed upon the wide landscape of their pilgrimage. Like friends, I say, let us talk together, and say a frank word to each other. It is not for me, now, to attempt to explain the mysteries of the present work; many things



in its pages, which appear dark and obscure, might easily be made plain as sunlight, by a simple reference to that great science of the Soul, which in our day is called Magnetism. But for the present, I will not attempt any explanation of these mysteries; in a future work I may lift the veil from all that now appears incredible in the history of Paul Ardenheim. 'But this work is Improbable—its events are wild—unnatural—the very machinery of the story is based upon supernatural agency!' To objections like these, I might answer, in a frank and confidential way, my friend:

'Truth is stranger than Fiction. Wherefore? Because Fiction only revels and glows in the Probable, while Truth in her noblest form, dares, and conquers the Impossible. Was ever Fiction so wild, so romantic, so utterly defiant of all your rules of criticism, as the actual life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Fiction in its present form as displayed in the poems and novels of the present day, does not present extravagant views of life, or paint pictures that transcend probability; its delineations, or the contrary, are only extravagant in their tameness, and transcendent in their mathematical probability. 'The truest of true histories never look at first sight, like Truth. Tell a man of Franklin's day, that a time would come—was coming, and the boy of ten years old might live to see it—when carriages would go by themselves; when ships would cross the ocean without sails; when a man in Boston would converse with his friend in New Orleans, by means of a wire stretched along an infinitude of poles! Ten chances to one, but Dr. Franklin himself would have put you out of his office, for assertions wild as these: without a doubt, any one of Dr. Franklin's neighbors would have quelled your lunacy in a mad-house. The veriest man of "*common-sense*" of Franklin's day,—the merest gossip of a neighborhood, or a newspaper could have told you, that your brain was mad, your skull soft, your blood red-hot with fever.

How many years is it since a crowd of our most respectable citizens—men of common-sense, mark you—none of your vague dreamers, but substantial men, familiar with business, and eloquent in bank notes—stood laughing and jeering on a Philadelphia wharf, while crazy John Fitch attempted to propel a boat without sails; merely by the aid of paddles and steam? Poor John Fitch, how they pitied him, these men of Matter-of-Fact! He starved to death, while his "Folly" that is the boat intended to be propelled by the agency of paddles and steam—rotted snugly in some muddy hole, near Kensington. And now, the steamboat which was John Fitch's folly, has become Robert Fulton's fame; and the steam car, and Magnetic Telegraph, which in Franklin's day, would have scared a whole church of 'common sense' men into spasms, are admitted to exist, even by the most respectable newspapers.

'The Thing, we deem Improbable, my friend, is many a time just the thing, about which we know precisely—nothing. Everything great in

science, history or religion, has at first view been *the most improbable thing in the world*. Paul was mad when he spoke of Brotherhood among men; Galileo mad when he said the earth moved round the sun; Washington mad when he said that he could defeat the tyranny of an Anointed King.

'The rule that is good in history, science and religion, is also true in literature. Mad Paradise Lost—mad Childe Harold—mad Zanone! All three mad at the time of their publication, and their respective authors, worthy of nothing so much as a dark cell, with shower baths and straight jackets innumerable.

'If works like these have been called "mad!" and their authors assailed as either harmless idiots or malignant demoniacs, how shall a poor author like your humble friend, ever summon courage, to write—to print a book like Paul Ardenheim?

'Now I do not claim for the present work, that the incidents, which it embodies, occurred precisely, at the time and place, as they are set down; but I *do* claim for these incidents, that they are true to the springs of human action—true to the secret history of the heart of man—true to the feelings, which sway mankind, in all ages and in every clime.

'At the same time these incidents are utterly improbable. They are altogether impossible. The author, grown reckless of the critical stiletto, out-herods—herod, out-horrors—horror; he prides himself on having written "*the most improbable book in the world*."

'The critics who expect to 'use up' (in our own choice language) this book and its author, will find all their thunder stolen before hand. Their withering sarcasms about "Monk Lewis," "Mrs. Radcliffe," "works of the French school," etc. etc. will not avail them in this case. They will have to invent a new vocabulary of slang, and become familiar, with something more venomous even than their souls, in order to abuse a book, which stares them in the face, with its motto—"THE MOST IMPROBABLE BOOK IN THE WORLD."

'The very title of the work will appal the writings of the small papers, and shock into spasms, the portentous thugs of the Magazines. "The Monk of the Wissahikon!" "This author is at his old tricks again; he wrote the Monks of Monk-Hall, and now he writes the Monk of Wissahikon. Will he never have done with monks? Who ever heard of Monks on the Wissahikon, or if you come to that, what is the Wissahikon, but an obscure mill-stream, hidden somewhere among big hills? Will he never have done with horrors? He wrote the Legends of the Revolution—we all know that the Revolution is past and gone—our people demand something more *practical* than this worn-out matter of the Revolution, and—all that sort o' thing. He crowds his pages with horror; skeletons; corpses; daggers; skulls; Monk Lewis is a fool to him in the horrible, and he distances poor Mrs. Radcliffe in the way of the monstrous. Be-



sides his works smack of the French School ; a school made infamous by the licentious George Sand, the profligate Sue, and the unnatural Dumas. Why does he not attempt something in a quiet vein,—*founded on fact*—touched with unpretending pathos, and pointing to some impressive moral, such as the immaculate purity of our banking institutions, or the spotless integrity of the Corporation which built Girard College, or the mysterious query, what ever became of the Funds of the United States Bank ?”

‘There, my friend, you have it—a *critique* ready mad and at the service of any gentleman, connected with the critical department of our literature. Or, should your taste, incline to those delectable productions, which adorn the ‘*literary*’ papers, under the head of ‘*burlesque of Mr.—*’ *S style*,’ let me give you an idea, how this peculiar kind of literature is elaborated. Take the purest thought that ever flowed from an author’s pen—break it into short paragraphs—array it in all the garniture of big capitals and marks of admiration—slime it well, with some choice obscenity, and your work is done. The author is burlesqued. He is put down. These writers of ‘burlesques’ are terrible fellows. I remember one of the select band, who made capital fun out of the Death Scene of Nathan Hale ; he grew quite merry over the dying struggles of the Martyr and Hero, and by a clever piece of wit, turned the last sigh, which came from his livid lips, into a laughable joke ? The peculiar wit of these gentlemen is never so vivacious, as when it capers about, over the bones of the dead—it is quite boisterous, in its laughter, when it mounts the Altar of Religion, and slavers its obscenity there. It can take up any passage of the Bible, and with its free, lively vein, write Divinity into a jest, and mock the last hour of the Dying Redeemer, with a freedom of manner and an elevation of tone, worthy of the thief, who scoffed his God, and—died blaspheming. Indeed things like this, have been done, in more than one case by “able critics”—“withering burlesque writers,” precisely of the same class, as the respectable gentlemen who figure in certain of our newspapers and magazines.’

‘But why mention these persons,’ I hear you exclaim—‘Do you expect to impress their natures, with any such ideas, as the purity of woman ; the good in the heart of universal man ; the divine lesson of Brotherhood, as displayed in the life of the Redeemer ?’

‘No, my friend. I expect nothing of the kind. And on reflection I am sorry that I have blotted this page, with even the mention of these “common stabbers.”—But now, let me turn to you, my friend, and thank you for your generous sympathy with my labors. I have never seen your face—have never taken you by the hand. And yet, as I sit in the loneliness of my room, writing these closing words, I cannot,—even if I would—repress the throb that pulsates at my heart, when I reflect, that you are my friend. A friend neither bought with money, nor won by baseness ; but gathered to my heart, by pages like these, which I now send forth to



you. Pages, written amid various circumstances; amid the clamor of slander, or by '*the light of a candle held in the skeleton hand of Poverty*,' but which still I hope, are true to the best instincts of humanity.—And so, our familiar talk is over, and I once more glance into the pages of the Ancient Record, where I chronicled, an incident of some interest in the life of the Monk of Wissahikon:—

“One night, in a miserable garret, hidden away in some obscure *fau-bourg* of the great city of Paris, there sat a lonely student, keeping the vigil of his thought, and even as he gazed with his vacant eyes, upon the flame of the expiring candle, tracing absently upon a sheet of paper, his unknown name, '*Maximilien Robespierre*.' And even as he sat there, so sad and lonely, with half-formed thought, glimmering in his vacant glance, there appeared to him a stranger, whose face was impressed with a Sorrow unutterable. And he took the lonely youth by the hand, and told him of his Future, and pointed him to a path, which covered with blood, and strewn with crowns and thornes, ended at the foot of the Guillotine. 'This path you will walk—yonder King you will kill—and at last your stern mission accomplished, you will die abhorred upon your own Guillotine.' And the Boy-Student trembled at the prophecy of the unknown, who passed from the place ere his last word, had ceased to echo, but left the record of his name, beneath the name already written. The names together read thus—'*MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE* \* \* \* '*PAUL ARDENHEIM*.'”

THE END.



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